The Regional Committee, at its thirtieth session, adopted resolution WPR/RC30.R10 (see Annex 1) which recommended to the Executive Board that action should be taken for WHO to consider financing the cost of travel, excluding per diem, of a representative from each Member State to attend sessions of the Regional Committee. The Executive Board, at its sixty-fifth session, adopted resolution EB65.R2 (see Annex 3) which invited all the regional committees to consider this proposal at their sessions in 1980 and to submit their views and comments for consideration by the Executive Board at its sixty-seventh session in January 1981.

In submitting this item for further discussion by the Regional Committee, the Regional Director presents, in paragraphs 6 and 7, the financial implications of having taken into account the following operative paragraphs of resolution EB65.R2:

"(1) ...........

(b) the effect which the adoption of this proposal could have on the total funds available for technical cooperation with Member States;

(c) the possibility of limiting the proposed reimbursement by WHO of the cost of travel to regional committees to representatives from Member States whose contributions to the Organization's regular budget are assessed at the minimum rate;"

The views expressed at the Executive Board are contained in Annex 2.

The Regional Committee is requested to review the matter again and to submit its final recommendation to the Executive Board, taking into consideration the views expressed by the Executive Board and the above-mentioned operative paragraphs of resolution EB65.R2.
1. The Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, at its thirtieth session in October 1979, adopted a resolution on the cost of travel of representatives (Annex 1). In operative paragraph 2 of that resolution, the Regional Committee recommended to the Executive Board and, through it, to the World Health Assembly that action should be taken for WHO to consider financing the cost of travel, excluding per diem, of a representative from each Member State to attend sessions of the Regional Committee.

2. In introducing the report of the Regional Committee to the Executive Board in January 1980, the Regional Director for the Western Pacific pointed out that "representatives from three of the nineteen Member States in the Region had been unable to attend the thirtieth session, mainly for financial reasons. The Committee had expressed its concern at their absence in view of the increasing involvement of the Regional Committee in the work of WHO and its role as a major policy-making body and forum for promoting technical cooperation among Member States". The Committee had therefore decided to recommend the measures mentioned in paragraph 1 above.

3. The action previously taken on the subject during the period 1948-1954 is described in paragraph 2 of the Director-General's report to the Executive Board, which reads as follows:

"The question of payment of travel expenses by WHO for representatives to regional committees was considered on a number of occasions by the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly during the period from 1948 to 1954. The action taken in this respect may be summarized as follows:

(i) The Executive Board in 1948 authorized by resolution EB2.R53 the reimbursement for transportation expenses of one representative only of each Member State to the first meeting of each regional committee.

(ii) In 1950 the Board, in resolution EB5.R61, confirmed its decision that reimbursement of transportation expenses of one representative of each Member State be authorized for the first meeting of each regional committee only, and that reimbursement for such expenditure should not be authorized for subsequent meetings of regional committees.

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3Document EB65/14 Add.1.
(iii) In 1953 the Board, after reviewing a study of regionalization, recommended to the World Health Assembly in resolution EB11.R50 that it authorize the reimbursement of each Member State and each Associate Member for the actual travelling expenses of one representative to not more than one session a year of the regional committee. However, the Sixth World Health Assembly (1953) decided in resolution WHA6.44 to postpone its consideration of the matter and invited regional committees to study and comment on the Board's proposal.

(iv) As requested by the Sixth World Health Assembly, the regional committees examined this matter at their sessions in 1953. The Regional Committees for Africa, Europe and the Western Pacific recommended that the travel expenses of representatives attending regional committee meetings should be borne by the Member States and Associate Members concerned. The Regional Committee for the Americas proposed that such expenses should be reimbursed. The Regional Committee for South-East Asia expressed the opinion that 'such payment of travel expenses by WHO is desirable if it does not reflect adversely on the field programmes of the Organization'.

(v) In 1954 the Executive Board, having considered the comments of regional committees on the payment of travel expenses of representatives attending their sessions, withdrew its earlier recommendations on this subject, and in resolution EB13.R27 recommended to the World Health Assembly that these expenses should not be reimbursed by WHO. The Seventh World Health Assembly (1954), in resolution WHA7.27, accepted the Board's recommendation and decided that these expenses should not be reimbursed by WHO."

4. Discussions during the sixty-fifth session of the Executive Board indicated that there was a consensus with regard to the suggestion made by the Director-General that the views of other regional committees should be obtained. Extracts of the summary record of the views expressed at the ninth meeting are contained in Annex 2.2

5. Subsequently, the Executive Board adopted a resolution (Annex 3) which invited the regional committees to consider the recommendation of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific at their 1980 sessions and to submit their views and comments for consideration by the Board at its sixty-seventh session in January 1981, taking into account operative paragraphs 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c) of the same resolution.

1"WHO Official Records, No. 52, 1954, Annex 5, paragraph 2.1. As the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean did not meet in 1953, this matter was not studied and commented on by it."


6. The estimated cost implications in 1982-83 for the Western Pacific Region of the recommendation of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, taking into account the alternatives mentioned in operative paragraphs 1(b) and 1(c) of resolution EB65.R2, are US$39,000 and US$22,000 respectively.

7. It should be noted that the effect of financing the cost of travel by economy class, excluding per diem, for one representative from each Member State to attend sessions of the Regional Committee, will reduce the funds available for technical cooperation in 1982-83 by either US$39,000 or US$22,000, depending on whether operative paragraph 1(b) or 1(c) of resolution EB65.R2 is selected.

8. The amounts shown in paragraphs 6 and 7 above are based on the number of Member States in the Western Pacific Region at the present time, that is, no increase in membership between now and 1982-83. They do not take into consideration the costs for representatives of the four metropolitan countries, which are difficult to estimate because representatives change from time to time, travelling from different areas under the responsibility of their metropolitan governments. In addition, cost increases in air fares by 1982-83 have been estimated at 7% per annum.

9. The Regional Committee may now wish to review the matter again keeping in mind the clarifications given above as well as the views expressed by the Executive Board in January 1980.
RESOLUTION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC

Thirtieth session

COST OF TRAVEL OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Regional Committee,

Referring to resolution WPR/RC4.R18, which recommended that the travelling expenses of Member and Associate Member States for attendance at sessions of regional committees be borne by the Member and Associate Member governments;

Noting that the cost of travel, excluding per diem, of a delegate from each Member State to the World Health Assembly is borne by the Organization;

Recognizing the increasing involvement of the Regional Committee in the work of WHO and its role as a major policy-making organ and a forum for promoting technical cooperation between Member States of the WHO Western Pacific Region;

Stressing the need for all Member States of the Region to be involved in the deliberations of the Regional Committee;

1. SYMPATHIZES with those Member States that, because of financial constraints, have either been unable to send representatives to sessions of the Regional Committee in recent years or have sent representatives despite the financial hardship involved;

2. RECOMMENDS to the Executive Board and, through it, to the World Health Assembly that action should be taken for WHO to consider financing the cost of travel, excluding per diem, of a representative from each Member State to attend sessions of the Regional Committee.

Seventh meeting, 5 October 1979

WPR/RC30/SR/7
Mr FURTH (Assistant Director-General) drew attention to paragraph 2 of document EB65/14 Add.1, which summarized the action taken during the period 1948 to 1954 concerning the reimbursement of travel expenses of representatives at sessions of regional committees. He drew attention to the fact that in 1953 the regional committees had expressed different opinions on the question of reimbursement, and consequently the Seventh World Health Assembly had decided, upon the recommendation of the Board, that such expenses should not be reimbursed by WHO. The Director-General therefore considered that it would be helpful to obtain again the views of the other regional committees on the question. A draft resolution on the subject was to be found in paragraph 3 of the above-mentioned document.

Dr HIDDLESTONE .......... Referring to the question of reimbursement of travel costs, he emphasized that the problem was particularly relevant to small, newly-independent States. It was a paradox that those countries that had the greatest need of the stimulus of a regional meeting were those least able to afford the travel. The discussion held on the question had highlighted the difficulties of introducing such a scheme. Reimbursement was obviously not necessary for all Member States; indeed, if it were accorded to all it would be to the detriment of other better uses of the financial resources involved. Moreover, a difficult situation might arise if the matter was left to the discretion of the Regional Directors, since the accounts could well identify those who sought such support.

Paragraph 3 of document EB65/14 Add.1 wisely suggested that the other regional committees should consider the question and report back to the Board at its sixty-seventh session; he strongly endorsed that proposal.

Dr RIDINGS .......... He shared Dr Hiddlestone's views regarding the reimbursement of travel expenses. Without the attendance of all Member States the effectiveness of regional work could be considerably diminished, and he therefore urged the Board and the other regional committees to give the problem very earnest consideration.

Dr GALAHOV (adviser to Dr Venediktov) asked the Secretariat whether an estimate could be made of the total cost involved in reimbursing travel expenses. He endorsed the proposal that the question should be referred to the regional committees.

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Professor DOGRAMACI endorsed most of the remarks made by Dr Ridings but disagreed with the suggestion concerning the reimbursement of travel costs. He realized that participation of representatives from all countries contributed to the effective work of regional committees, but an exception could not be made for one region and the reimbursement of travel costs of representatives to all regional committees, even for representatives of the rich countries, could adversely affect health programmes all over the world. He agreed that all regional committees should be consulted on the matter, but thought they should be asked not whether they thought that travel costs should be reimbursed but rather to reflect on the financial implications of such a measure and its impact on the Organization's programmes.

Dr SEBINA .......... He agreed that the question of reimbursement of travel costs should be submitted to the regional committees for some collective decision, especially since costs of travel of one delegate or representative from each country to the Health Assembly were borne by the Organization. If only representatives from certain countries were to have their costs for travel to regional committees reimbursed, who would decide to which countries that applied? If it was thought possible for the regional committees to reach a consensus, he could support the proposed draft resolution.

Dr BOYER (alternate to Dr Bryant) .......... He fully understood the views expressed by Members of the Western Pacific Region concerning reimbursement of travel expenses and agreed that all countries should be represented at regional committee meetings. However, the Seventh World Health Assembly had decided that those expenses should not be reimbursed by the Organization and since that time, no one had questioned that decision. He agreed with Professor Dogramaci that the measure, if introduced, should apply to all countries, and that it would have a considerable impact on programme resources limiting progress towards the goal of health for all. There were various possibilities before the Board. It could refer the question to the regional committees without comment; it could do so, drawing attention to the fact that such reimbursement would be a drain on programme resources or - the solution he himself preferred - decide not to refer the matter to the regional committees on the grounds that it might be a waste of time to reopen a long-settled policy question. If the Board did not adopt the third solution, he strongly felt that the documentation submitted by the Secretariat to the regional committees should point out that they must weigh up to two important policy questions: the drain on programme resources against the importance of every country being represented at sessions of regional committees. The latter should not be led to assume that the Board was submitting the matter to them with a positive recommendation.

Dr MORK said that all members of the Board understood the problems of small countries with limited financial resources but also shared the concern expressed by several members that funds to reimburse their travel costs would have to be drawn from programme resources. The situation had greatly changed since the Seventh World Health Assembly decision. At that time, most of the countries concerned by the recommendation had not yet
attained independence. He thought that the matter should be referred to
the various regional committees, but it would be useful if the Secretariat
not only tried to make some estimates of the economic consequences of such
a measure, but also looked into different ways of solving the problem. For
instance, reimbursement could be limited to the countries paying the
minimum assessment, which would considerably reduce the total economic
burden on the Organization. He supported the adoption of a resolution by
the Board but thought that the proposed draft resolution might need
redrafting in the light of the current discussion.

Dr BARAKAMFIITIYE .......... In view of the increasing involvement of
the regional committees in the work of WHO and their role as major
policy-making organs, he agreed that a solution should be found to the
difficulties encountered by some States in bearing the travel costs of
representatives to attend the sessions of these committees. It would,
however, be helpful if the Secretariat could produce specific figures for
the costs involved and any other relevant clarifications to enable the
regional committees to discuss the matter and the Board to take a decision
at its session in January 1981.

Dr GALEGO PIMENTEL .......... She had not yet formed a definite
opinion concerning the reimbursement of travel costs of representatives to
regional committees because not enough data was available on the subject.
She would like to know the percentage of countries that were unable to send
representatives for lack of funds, whether that percentage was significant
and whether the problem recurred for the same countries. Such statistics
should be made available for each regional committee because the situation
might be peculiar to one region. If the majority of regions had not
encountered that problem and were consulted on that request, there might be
a divergence of views and the suggestion might be rejected by the Board and
the Health Assembly. That could be prejudicial to countries in one
particular region. She thought, however, that such a measure, requested by
one regional committee, need not necessarily be applied to all regions and
endorsed Dr Morck’s proposal that consideration should be given to
alternative solutions.

Dr PATTERSON said that she felt sympathetic towards the request for
reimbursement of travel costs of representatives to regional committees
because she had experience of the financial difficulties encountered by
newly-independent countries. Although she accepted the need for a general
policy, she thought that the Board should be able to exercise discretion
with regard to small, newly-independent countries. Regional committees
were becoming increasingly important in decision-making and strategy and
those small countries where the need was the greatest should be enabled to
send a representative to their sessions. She realized that if their travel
costs were reimbursed from regional funds, that might reduce funds
available for programmes, but the motivation lost by not attending regional
sessions might mean that those funds were not being used to the best
advantage. Perhaps the Secretariat could look into the matter and see
whether or not there was a real need. If there was, she would support the
recommendation. She realized that the cost would be substantial if the
measure was applied to all regions, but so far only one region had requested reimbursement. She agreed with Dr Mork that criteria could be worked out, perhaps reimbursement for the small number of countries with the minimum assessment. She would like the Secretariat to find out the distances and costs involved for each region.

Mr FURTH (Assistant Director-General) said that he had been asked to estimate the cost of reimbursing the cost of travel for attendance at sessions of the regional committees for one person from each Member State. He estimated that the total cost for the two-year period 1982-1983 would be approximately $330,000. For individual regions, the cost was estimated to range from a low of about $11,000 in 1982 for South-East Asia to a high of about $46,000 in 1983 for the African Region. He confirmed the present practice of reimbursing the travel expenses of one delegate from each Member State to the Health Assembly, a practice which had been established by a Health Assembly resolution and which applied to all Member States, regardless of need. As some members of the Board had questioned the need of Member States in other regions, he suggested that the matter should be referred to them for discussion. The Board might be interested to learn, however, that the Regional Director of the South-East Asia Region had already written to the Director-General, before the adoption of the resolution by the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, to inform him of the need for such reimbursement in South-East Asia, at least for certain Member States.

If the Board wished, the draft resolution could be amended by the rapporteurs with the help of the Secretariat to indicate the points made in the debate.

The CHAIRMAN noted that some members of the Board had reservations about the wording of the draft resolution in document EB65/14 Add.1, fearing that reimbursement of the travel expenses referred to might be a heavy burden on the budget and could lead to a reduction in the level of activities and programmes.

He therefore suggested that the Rapporteurs be requested to redraft the draft resolution, taking due account of the discussion, so as to indicate that the regional committees must be fully aware of the possible impact on their programmes of such reimbursement, mentioning also the current procedure for reimbursing the travel costs of one delegate or representative from each country to attend the Health Assembly, and asking the regional committees to consider the proposal in the light of the need to reduce unnecessary expenditure. In the absence of any objection, he would assume that such was the Board's wish.

It was so agreed.
REPORTS OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTORS ON REGIONAL COMMITTEE
MATTERS REQUIRING THE PARTICULAR ATTENTION OF THE BOARD

Reimbursement of travel costs of representatives
to regional committees

The Executive Board,

Having noted the recommendation of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific that action should be taken for WHO to consider financing the cost of travel, excluding per diem, of a representative from each Member State to attend sessions of the Regional Committee;

Recognizing the importance of all Member States participating in the proceedings of the regional committees;

INVITES the regional committees:

(1) to consider this proposal at their sessions in 1980 taking into account:

(a) the views expressed by members of the Executive Board at its sixty-fifth session, in January 1980, when this matter was discussed;\(^1\)

(b) the effect which the adoption of this proposal could have on the total funds available for technical cooperation with Member States;

(c) the possibility of limiting the proposed reimbursement by WHO of the cost of travel to regional committees to representatives from Member States whose contributions to the Organization's regular budget are assessed at the minimum rate;

(2) to submit their views and comments for consideration by the Executive Board at its sixty-seventh session, in January 1981.

(Sixteenth meeting, 18 January 1980)

\(^1\)See document EB65/1980/REC/2, Summary record of the ninth meeting, section 1.