



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC
BUREAU REGIONAL DU PACIFIQUE OCCIDENTAL

REGIONAL COMMITTEE

WPR/RC48/NGO/8

Forty-eighth session
Sydney
22-26 September 1997

26 September 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Provisional agenda item 21

**STATEMENT BY MS PRYANTHI FERNANDO,
MANAGER, ASIA PACIFIC REGION, OF
WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL**

We would like to comment on WHO's strategy document for the 21st century.

We commend WHO for the good job they have done in developing this document, which we consider as a good starting point. We also wish to commend WHO for inviting nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to explore ways whereby they can play a more active role in the renewal of the health for all strategy. This is a very good practice and we would very much like this to continue.

There is a very strong level of motivation, enthusiasm and good will among the NGOs in the support for the health for all movement. We wish to combine and bring all our strengths and competence in the NGO world into a critical mass to make health for all a reality. NGOs at the international, national and local levels are playing a key role and remain committed to the achievement of health for all and can add further to WHO's impact and effectiveness.

We promote a vision of health as being central to sustainable human development. We also promote ethics, equity and gender perspectives in all health concerns. We would however, like to see a stronger engagement of NGOs at the regional level.

We believe, at its heart, health for all is a moral and ethical imperative. We call for a more profound definition of health which includes the spiritual dimension an essential component of health, along with economic, social, physical and mental components. This will allow us to take a more wholistic approach to health, making health everybody's responsibility.

It is more important that in the 21st century health for all does not become another slogan but becomes operative. We are deeply concerned that 1.5 billion people around the world do not have access to basic health care service. It is for this reason we are promoting the creation of a global health watch to monitor and to determine how our governments, WHO and NGOs alike are fulfilling our health for all responsibilities, and to ensure availability and equitable distribution of resources, especially among those countries and communities in greatest need.

We believe the partnership between WHO and NGOs is crucial in the realization of Health for all strategy. For this we need a stronger structure to nurture and support the new partnership.

We are, therefore, recommending to WHO to review and reformulate appropriate structures for NGOs to relate to and work with WHO at the regional level. We believe, we can learn from other existing examples of collaboration between UN agencies and NGOs. For example the NGO committee on UNICEF and the PARINAC - between UNHCR and NGOs to mention at least two of them, which operate at the international level.

In the true spirit of participation and partnership NGOs would like to be part of the review and reformulation process as well as find new ways to broaden participation to include those committed NGOs currently not involved at the regional level.

As an organization we are committed:

- to support the health for all movement regionally and globally;
- to enhance formal and informal relationship between WHO and NGOs at regional and national levels, like we have at global level;
- to improve channels of communication between WHO and NGOs;
- to engage in continuous dialogue on key health issues at regional and national levels; and
- to promote the importance of health as rights for women, men and children throughout their lives, with special attention to combating poverty and its devastating effects, particularly on socially excluded and marginalized population.