

REGIONAL COMMITTEE

WP/RC8/11
15 July 1957

Eighth Session
Hong Kong
5-11 September 1957

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Agenda Item 14.4

METHOD OF APPOINTING REGIONAL DIRECTORS

At the nineteenth session of the Executive Board, the Government of New Zealand presented a memorandum suggesting that the present method of appointing regional directors be altered in such a way that the Executive Board would first consider the possible candidates and, having nominated one, would refer his name to the Regional Committee for confirmation.¹

The Board, by resolution EB19.R61 decided that the matter should be considered further at the twentieth session at which time a representative of the Government of New Zealand would be invited to explain the proposal, and decided also that after a further study had been carried out this proposal should be considered again by the Executive Board at its twenty-first session, taking into account any comments which should be invited from regional committees. The record of the discussion of this matter at the twentieth session of the Board is contained in the annex to this document.

In accordance with the third operative paragraph of resolution EB19.R61 the Regional Committee is invited to express its comments on this matter for the consideration of the Executive Board at its twenty-first session.

¹Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org. 76, Annex 22

Extract from document EB20/Min/2, 20-25

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"2. METHOD OF APPOINTING REGIONAL DIRECTORS:

The CHAIRMAN introduced the relevant documentation. He recalled that Annex 22 of Official Records No. 76 contained a proposal by the Government of New Zealand on the method of appointing regional directors and accordingly invited the representative of the Government of New Zealand to make a statement to the Board.

Dr MACLEAN expressed appreciation of the opportunity of further explaining his Government's views. He re-emphasized that the New Zealand Government had made its proposal impartially and objectively and without in any way intending to imply criticism of the regional directors appointed to date. Indeed, his Government had the greatest confidence in the Regional Director for the Western Pacific and had heartily supported his reappointment a few years previously. His Government interpreted the provisions of Article 52 of the Constitution, which laid down that the head of the regional office should be the regional director appointed by the Board in agreement with the regional committee, to indicate that that appointment should be made by the Board as the executive organ of the Health Assembly. Clearly, then, it would be in accordance with the Constitution either for the Board to select the regional director and for the regional committee to confirm that appointment, or vice versa. It would, however, be generally agreed that selection constituted the more important phase of that procedure, and his Government would therefore submit that the selection should be made by the Executive Board in the first place.

Regionalization presented many advantages but also certain risks, and if regionalization were to function to its best advantage it was essential that a regional director should be a man of great ability and strong personality. In a region such as the Western Pacific, where conditions were perhaps unique, communications were necessarily a limiting factor; it would consequently be difficult for a representative of New Zealand, for instance, to be fully informed of the suitability and qualifications of the various applicants before attending a meeting of the regional committee. It would accordingly appear that conditions were more favourable for a wise choice if that choice rested with the Executive Board, which would have the benefit of the advice of the Director-General and could have full information at its disposal on the various applicants. He did not think that any objection that such a procedure might place too great power in the hands of the Director-General was valid since the full powers of decision would rest with the Board itself. The present method of appointment of regional directors while it complied with Article 52, did not, in his Government's opinion, give full effect to the intentions motivating that article when originally drafted. Naturally, the regional committees would still have every opportunity of expressing their views in the matter and he did not believe that the method supported by his Government would prove any more cumbersome or time-consuming than that followed at present.

/Dr JAFAR said ...

Dr JAFAR said he would be interested to know, since Dr Maclean had given the assurance that his Government's proposal had not been based on any criticism of the regional directors appointed hitherto, what had in fact stimulated that government to submit a proposal to revise the existing procedure. Furthermore, since such existing procedure provided for all aspects of the consultation desired by the New Zealand Government, he could not see where the advantage lay of adopting a new procedure under which the Executive Board would be performing the same function at an earlier rather than a later stage.

Dr MACLEAN emphasized that his Government's proposal had not implied any dissatisfaction but had been made on the grounds that the existing method could, under certain circumstances, lead to difficulties. His Government had, he believed, been stimulated to make such a proposal as a result of the discussions which had taken place at the time of the study of regionalization carried out in the Western Pacific Region, and which had pointed to the possible advantages and disadvantages of regionalization.

While no doubt the Executive Board had an opportunity of expressing its views under the present procedure, he would suggest that that was more of a token opportunity since he was sure that it would be most unusual for an objection to be raised by the confirming authority on a selection already made. Accordingly, greater safeguards existed where the selection was made in the first place by the Board.

Professor PESONEN considered the New Zealand proposal most important and worthy of serious consideration. It was clearly in the interest of the Organization to have the best qualified personnel available and, while it was fortunate that no dissatisfaction had at any time been expressed in respect of the regional directors hitherto appointed, it was desirable for the situation to be improved as far as possible. It should be borne in mind that the applicants for posts in the Organization had increased in a degree commensurate with the expansion of the Organization's activities throughout the world.

He would agree with the view expressed by the representative of the Government of New Zealand that the part played by the Executive Board in appointing regional directors was at present purely formal; moreover, the Director-General did not play any direct role in that important task. That was not, in his view, an ideal situation, as the Executive Board and Director-General were mainly responsible for the Organization's work throughout the year. Furthermore, as regional directors were required to maintain close contact with the Director-General it was obviously desirable that the latter should have an opportunity of giving his opinion in the matter. He would, however, differ from the New Zealand Government in regard to the details of the proposed procedure. In the New Zealand proposal the Executive Board played a leading part whereas the regional committee merely confirmed its selection, although it would of course have the right to make any representations it saw fit. He would think that the regional committees should have more authority as they too would be required to work in very close collaboration with the regional directors.

He would accordingly, in order to give the regional committees full responsibility and to meet the views expressed by the New Zealand Government, suggest an alternative procedure. He proposed that the Director-General should request Member States to suggest applicants for the post of regional

/director, giving ...

director, giving all the necessary particulars and qualifications; those names would be put before the regional committee concerned, which would then submit the three applicants of its choice to the Executive Board which, after hearing the views of the Director-General, would select one. That method would provide for the active participation of all concerned and would not call for any amendments to the relevant Article of the Constitution.

Dr TOGBA failed to see any advantage in changing the present system. As the regional directors had to work in extremely close contact with the governments in the regions, it was important that they should be recommended by the Member States concerned. Although the Director-General and the Executive Board clearly had the full responsibility for the Organization's work on a world-wide basis, it was essential that governments should have as many opportunities for participating in the functioning of the Organization as possible. The existing system had proved entirely satisfactory so far and there accordingly seemed to be no reason to change that procedure; in the African Region, for example, it had proved altogether successful. He called attention to possible unfortunate repercussions on co-operation with governments if the selection of regional directors had not originally been made by the countries primarily concerned.

The CHAIRMAN drew particular attention to the third operative paragraph of resolution EBL9.R61, which stated that the proposal should be considered again by the Executive Board at its twenty-first session, taking into account any comments which should be invited from regional committees. He presumed that the proposal of the New Zealand Government, together with the statement made by its Representative at the present meeting, in accordance with the second operative paragraph of that same resolution, would be placed before the regional committees that year and that the matter would then be reconsidered at the Board's following session. In the circumstances, a prolonged discussion seemed unnecessary at the present stage.

Dr SIRI said that while no doubt particular reasons had motivated the proposal made by the New Zealand Government, he did not believe that those reasons obtained in other regions. Where the Region of the Americas was concerned, for example, there did not appear to be any grounds to support a revision of the existing procedure, which was considered completely satisfactory.

Dr METCALFE did not consider that it should be taken for granted that a regional director should necessarily be recruited from the particular region which he would be serving; indeed, the most qualified person should be appointed regardless of the part of the world from which he came.

The CHAIRMAN regarded the discussion as concluded at the present stage, on the understanding that the matter would be considered again at the twenty-first session of the Executive Board.

He thanked the representative of the Government of New Zealand for having participated in the discussion."

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