

EB47/10 Add.1
ANNEX

JIU/REP/70/8



Report on a rationalization of the proceedings
and documentation of the World Health Assembly

by

Lucio Garcia del Solar and Joseph Sawe
Joint Inspection Unit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>	1
II. <u>COST OF THE ASSEMBLY</u>	3
III. <u>METHODS OF WORK</u>	5
(A) <u>Problems of substance</u>	6
1) A modification in the purpose of the General Discussion	8
2) Holding of a debate on future programmes	11
3) Institutionalization of the Technical Discussions	14
4) Institution of a debate on the technical aspects of field operations.....	15
5) Treatment of administrative matters by the Assembly	16
(B) <u>Questions of detail</u>	
1) Location	17
2) Convening the sessions	18
3) Duration	19
4) Agenda	20
5) Participants	20
6) Proceedings	22
7) Opening Plenary meetings	24
8) Voting	26
9) Main Committees.....	26
(a) Officers	27
(b) Working hours	27
(c) Time-limits for speeches	28
(d) Night sessions	28
10) Resolutions	29
11) Reports of the Committees	31
12) Role of the Executive Board	32

	<u>Page</u>
IV. <u>DOCUMENTATION</u>	34
1) Cost	34
2) List of documents	34
3) Distribution	35
4) Qualitative analysis	36
5) Quantitative analysis	37
6) Document on future programmes	40
7) Journal of the Assembly	41
V. <u>PERIODICITY OF THE BUDGET AND OF THE ASSEMBLY</u>	42
1) Biennial budget	42
2) Biennial Assembly	45
VI. <u>CONCLUSIONS</u>	52
VII. <u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u>	55

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The conferences of the United Nations system of organizations continue to be the most important focus upon which the programmes for international co-operation and maintenance of peace are based.
2. As these programmes grow and the number of Member States increases, conferences get bigger in size and the cost of running them continues to rise. In this respect, the World Health Assembly is no exception.
3. The Joint Inspection Unit^{1/} has established as one of its main areas of study that of Conferences and Documentation. In response to one of the concerns expressed by the Committee of Fourteen, it has set about examining how to rationalize, in particular, the methods of work of the legislative meetings of the organizations in the United Nations system, not only to enable them to cope with the above-mentioned trends, but to make them more efficient and more purposeful. With these aims in view, it has prepared reports on the methods of work and documentation of the legislative meetings of UNESCO (JIU/REP/69/4) and FAO (JIU/REP/70/1).
4. Continuing the series of such studies, two inspectors attended the proceedings of the Twenty-third World Health Assembly. The inspectors were able, during the Assembly, to take advantage of the presence of many delegates from all parts of the world in order to discuss various points concerning the conduct of the Assembly. They wish to express their appreciation for the co-operation they received from delegates. Similarly the inspectors had numerous exchanges of views with senior officials of the WHO Secretariat, and wish to record their thanks also for their assistance in providing information for this study.

^{1/} The Joint Inspection Unit, the creation of which was recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee of Fourteen in para. 67B of its report to the General Assembly (document A/6343), came into existence on 1 January 1968 as a result of General Assembly resolutions 2150 (XXI) and 2360 (XXII). Apart from the United Nations, the following organizations participate in the inspection system by decision of their respective legislative or governing bodies : FAO, ILO, UNESCO, WHO, ITU, WMO, IMCO, IAEA, ICAO and UPU. The members of the Unit, from eight countries designated by the President of the General Assembly, were appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations after consultation with the other members of ACC. They are : Mr. Maurice Bertrand (France), Mr. L. Garcia del Solar (Argentina), Mr. Sreten Ilić (Yugoslavia), Mr. Robert M. Macy (United States of America), Mr. C.S. Jha (India), Mr. Joseph A. Sawe (Tanzania), Sir Leonard Scopes (U.K.) and Mr. Alexsei F. Sokirkin (U.S.S.R.).

5. One of the objectives of the Committees of Fourteen, in its efforts to achieve savings and improve efficiency in the administrative machinery of the organizations in the United Nations system, was to promote, so far as possible, a harmonization of procedures which, without affecting the individuality of the member agencies, would make it easier for Governments to give more co-ordinated attention to each agency's affairs.

6. In this connexion references will occasionally be made in this study to the methods of work of other organizations, with a view to suggesting solutions which, in our opinion, would be likely to benefit WHO. We hope that such parallels as are drawn will be understood merely for what they are, i.e. relevant examples, which the constitutional organs of WHO may accept - or not - as they see fit.

II. COST OF THE ASSEMBLY

7. The Committee of Fourteen, in paragraph 104 of its report (A/6343), made the following recommendation, the implementation of which, in its opinion, "would make it possible not only to rationalize the programme of conferences but also to ensure the best possible use of the financial and human resources available" :

"(d) In the budgets of the organizations of the United Nations family, the costs of conferences and meetings should be the subject of :

- (i) A special line in the budget, showing the expenditure directly attributable to conferences and meetings;
- (ii) An annex containing an estimate of the total expenditure pertaining directly and indirectly to these activities."

8. The specialized agencies so far studied (UNESCO, FAO and WHO) include in their budget documents very broad estimates which give a somewhat incomplete idea of the real cost of the legislative meetings. This is particularly apparent in the estimates of the cost of documentation. Some of the figures may be found scattered under various headings. In none of the three organizations' budgets is there a "special line", as recommended by the Committee of Fourteen, showing a breakdown of the cost of documentation for the organization's legislative meetings. The result is that the estimates given in the budget for the total cost of legislative meetings present a picture that may be somewhat remote from reality.

9. On this subject the Director-General of WHO, commenting on the recommendations of the Committee of Fourteen in his report to the Executive Board at its forty-first session (Official Records No. 165, p. 70, recommendation 43), said that :

"As regards identification in the budget estimates of 'indirect conference costs', it would first be necessary for all organizations to arrive at an agreed definition of this term. It would then be necessary to cost-account the budget estimates to identify and estimate the costs of the time devoted by individual staff members to meetings of the Health Assembly..... The Director-General is prepared to make a feasibility study of this matter when agreement has been reached by all organizations on a definition of 'indirect conference costs'."

10. Semantics apart, it is true that the determination of certain items of expenditure such as overheads and authorship of documents presents problems which may perhaps be resolved only once the international organizations adopt a comprehensive cost-accounting system as recommended by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report JIU/REP/69/2, but in the meantime, the organizations should get together in order to define the meaning of "indirect" costs. However, even without determining such expenditure, it should be possible to include in the budgets more explicit tables on the other documentation costs for legislative meetings which are not "indirect" in the strict sense of the term, such as the costs of translation, typing, printing, production and distribution of documents. In this connexion, special mention should be made of the item which the ILO devoted to the estimates of the International Labour Conference in its last Draft Programme and Budget. Within that item, miscellaneous and documentation costs are shown separately; explanations are given under the relevant headings, with a breakdown of the increases; the reports to be published are listed; and figures are supplied on the number of pages, languages and number of copies of every substantive document, of provisional and final reports and records, and of the component parts of every series of documents.

11. The official budgeted cost of the last few World Health Assemblies has been as follows : 1967, \$402,000; 1968, \$415,390; 1969, \$451,500^{1/} and 1970, \$474,200. This represents an annual average increase of 5.66 per cent, but the estimate for 1971 shows an increase of 14.3 per cent, mainly due to the extended use of Russian and Spanish.

12. The 1970 figure of \$474,200 includes some expenditure attributable to documentation, in an amount of \$246,435. When we asked the Secretariat for the total figures under this heading, we were given an additional estimate of \$320,394, which means that \$566,829 was spent on documentation alone^{2/}. The real estimate for the total cost of the Twenty-third Assembly would therefore be \$794,594, i.e. 67.6 per cent higher than that officially budgeted.

^{1/} The estimate of \$451,500 for the Twenty-second World Health Assembly rose to \$799,500 because the meeting was held away from Headquarters.

^{2/} On supplying us with the cost of documentation, the Secretariat stated that: "From the information we have collected, we have been able to make an estimate of this cost but, in the absence of a cost analysis, the cost of the various operations had to be calculated according to the number of pages produced in proportion to the total cost of the service during the year. The figures are therefore of only relative validity and should be regarded merely as indicating the order of magnitude."

III. METHODS OF WORK

13. The World Health Assembly is convened annually and the budget of WHO also has an annual cycle. This practice differs from that of other comparable agencies and from the specific recommendations of the Committee of Fourteen. Although the ILO convenes its legislative meeting annually, it has adopted the system of biennial budgeting, while UNESCO and FAO have both biennial legislative meetings and biennial budgets.

14. In structure, functions and objectives, the World Health Assembly resembles broadly the other legislative meetings of the United Nations system. From our examinations of the Twenty-third Assembly's methods of work, we found that its proceedings were conducted according to practices that have been tested over the years by the painstaking efforts of the Secretariat. As a result, from the organizational viewpoint the Assembly performed its work with unusual dispatch.

15. To achieve this, the Assembly has made a series of efforts to bring about improvements, mainly in the following areas:

- (i) Methods of work stricto sensu: Over the years the Organization has amended the terms of reference and improved the working methods of the Assembly's main bodies;
- (ii) The duration of the Assembly and the nature and length of its debates;
- (iii) The periodicity of the Assembly;
- (iv) The rules of procedure;
- (v) The use of official and working languages.

16. In observing the work of the Twenty-third Assembly, we collected some material for analysis and comments, which we shall divide into two categories:

- (A) Comments on problems of substance, with the object of making the proceedings and their results more purposeful, the aim being that the Assembly should not confine itself to the typical legislative task of adopting resolutions in response to constitutional requirements but should play a more vital role in laying down basic guidelines for the formulation of the Organization's policies and of world strategy in the field of public health;
- (B) Comments on questions of detail, for the purpose of streamlining some features of the Assembly's administrative machinery, the aim being to achieve greater rationalization of procedures, better use of the time available, and savings in cost for the Organization itself and for the Member States.

(A) Problems of substance

17. We have adopted this heading because these problems are concerned, not with the mechanics of the Assembly, but with the role it is called upon to play as the principal organ of WHO. The functions of the World Health Assembly are described in articles 18-23 of the Constitution; of these functions the most important are to determine the policies of the Organization, to supervise its financial policies and to approve the budget. The Assembly also has legislative functions in adopting conventions, agreements and regulations in the field of health.

18. Although the Constitution makes it perfectly clear that the Assembly is responsible for determining the policies of the Organization, the President of the Twenty-third Assembly, in his closing speech, stated:

"We had this year an exceptionally large number of financial, administrative and co-ordination questions on our agenda. In addition, the methods of work of the Assembly were subjected to a thorough examination But one cannot help noting with some concern the growing tendency towards placing more and more emphasis on financial stringencies....."

At the opening meeting the head of the Soviet delegation, for his part, expressed alarm that the Assembly was cutting down its consideration of scientific questions and prolonging its discussions on such matters as legal and administrative items which, in his opinion, were subsidiary and of secondary importance. That tendency, he said, threatened to transform the Assembly into an organ dealing with problems that were not fundamental to the Organization.

19. These views go straight to the heart of the matter. As seen by an outside observer, the World Health Assembly is a typically legislative conference, for the most part very well organized, at which matters assigned to it by the Constitution are discussed strictly in connexion with the draft programme and budget, whose provisions are of a relatively short-term projection.

20. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the way in which the Assembly thus discharges its duties, and which has remained virtually unchanged since the establishment of WHO, but it seems to us that the new demands made on international co-operation in economic and social matters have wrought drastic changes in the functions of the specialized Agencies, and that this development is bound to affect the functioning of their intergovernmental organs.

21. In WHO, as in other international organizations, the number of Member States has increased considerably since it was founded; the funds placed at its disposal, which in 1948 amounted to about \$5 million a year, now exceed \$100 million. More important than such figures, however, is the fact that the specialized agencies have ceased to be merely centres for research and the dissemination of ideas and have been transformed into dynamic operational complexes. WHO, while still devoting some of its activities to research, is increasingly engaged in assistance activities in the field, which account for the largest part of its regular budget.

22. This increase in operational activities is reflected in the work of the Assembly, where the delegates have to tackle a growing number of administrative and financial details connected with the many aspects of the programme proposed by the Director-General. This undoubtedly leads, more and more often to a somewhat cursory treatment of important scientific topics and to foregoing altogether discussion of the more tangible aspects of field operations. Neither do the general debate in the Plenary Sessions on the reports of the Director-General and the Executive Board, nor the consideration of the Director-General's proposed programme and budget in the Main Committees seem to give the Assembly the opportunity for a high-level exchange of ideas on the broad lines of future world strategy in the field of health. True, in the Technical Discussions scientific subjects are taken up, and in many cases these discussions have long-term implications. Moreover one of the Main Committees periodically considers an item on planning for a given period of five years. However, in neither case do the discussions give rise to resolutions specifically setting forth the details of real medium and long-term programmes.

23. It is appropriate to quote here what we said in our report on the FAO Conference:

"This question raises a fundamental problem which is common to the larger specialized agencies, and which must be tackled.... The problem is to make a choice, so that the legislative organs of those specialized agencies which are increasingly operational may concentrate on specific lines of activity. To do this they will have to consider revising some of their own ideas about their specific role. It cannot be maintained that the role of the legislative bodies should be to analyse in detail the action taken for the execution of the current programme... Nowadays, their fundamental role should be to serve as the main source of inspiration for the Organization's programmes which, for obvious reasons, must be mapped out several years in advance.... The organization should derive its strategic projections from the discussions held on policy matters in the Conference, seizing the opportunity created by the presence of delegations led by Ministers or very high-ranking officials from all the Member States."

24. The Health Assembly ought not to stand aloof from this development in the role of the legislative meetings and for that purpose, in our view, consideration might be given to the following suggestions aiming at a greater participation of the Member States during the conference in the determination of the policies of WHO.

1) Modification in the purpose of the General Discussion

25. It is the practice of the World Health Assembly, in common with the United Nations and most other international organizations, to hold at Plenary meetings, as its first item of business, a General Discussion consisting of statements by the Heads of delegations. However, unlike those of the specialized agencies studied previously, the General Discussion continues in the World Health Assembly until the session is far advanced; this is because the Main Committees are scheduled to begin their work on the third day of the session, and they do not sit when Plenary meetings are being held. The result is a complex sequence of suspensions and resumptions both of the General Discussion and of the Committees' discussions which continues throughout the session.

26. The purpose of the General Discussion in the World Health Assembly is to give the representatives of the Member States an opportunity, pursuant to Article 18, sub-paragraph (d) of the Constitution, to comment upon and approve the reports submitted by the Executive Board on its annual activities and by the Director-General on the activities of the Organization.

27. In practice, however, no specific discussion of these documents takes place. Instead, a series of statements are delivered in which the great majority of speakers take the opportunity to recount their Government's problems and achievements in the field of public health. Thus at the Twenty-third Assembly sixty-one out of ninety-one speakers dwelt almost exclusively on national activities; seventeen engaged in a critical analysis of the Director-General's report, the remainder of the statements being a combination of the two and only eight speakers referred to the Executive Board and/or its reports.

28. The result is that the meetings devoted to the General Discussion consist mostly of a succession of monologues, creating a somewhat tedious atmosphere which, in the view of many delegates, is scarcely in keeping with the high level of representation among the speakers, many of whom are Ministers of Health. True, some of these assured us that they often related their detailed accounts of national achievements to specific points in the programme, and that

such information could be useful inasmuch as it acquainted each delegation with events in other countries over the past year. Others, however, admitted that they refrained from taking part in such a debate for lack of interest, which may explain why thirty-three Member States made no statements in the General Discussion.

29. The General Discussion - which at the Twenty-third Assembly took up seven meetings lasting a total of seventeen hours - ends with the adoption of a resolution, automatically repeated each year, which notes with satisfaction the manner in which the programme has been planned and carried out by the Director-General and commends him for the work accomplished. The same procedure is repeated later in connexion with the Executive Board's reports.

30. The problem of the General Debates (or Discussions) is not confined to the World Health Assembly; it has also been a source of concern to the other organizations studied by us. In this connexion two questions have been raised. The first is that of the length of the debate and its effect on the time taken by the legislative meeting as a whole. This problem was tackled by UNESCO, FAO and ILO in the same way as by WHO : that is, by limiting the time allowed to each speaker. It is WHO, however, which has adopted by far the most drastic discipline, namely: ten minutes per statement; a light signal at the expiry of the time-limit; and the reading of speeches from the floor of the hall, irrespective of the speaker's status. Furthermore, as in UNESCO and FAO, it is suggested that if the Heads of delegations so desire, they may submit their texts in writing for publication in the records. In UNESCO and FAO, however, this suggestion applies only to those parts of the statements which spell out national achievements, whereas in WHO the purpose of the suggestion is to prevent speakers from exceeding the allotted ten minutes, whether they are speaking of national achievements or not.

31. The second problem raised in UNESCO and FAO, but not dealt with by WHO, goes to the heart of the matter, i.e. the purpose of the debate, which is thwarted if the speakers disregard its true objectives. The governing bodies of UNESCO and FAO take the view that the General Debate is useful to the extent that Ministers contribute ideas concerning the business of the Organization. To that end, UNESCO and FAO have taken steps to discourage references to national activities and to make the General Debate more purposeful; the aim is to discuss subjects representative of highly topical

problems in the organization's specific field of competence. Two to five topics are suggested by the governing bodies and communicated in good time to the Member States so that, without prejudice to the right of Heads of delegations to refer to any matter as they see fit, they may express their Governments' views on these topics.

32. WHO has not as yet taken measures to dissipate the misgivings felt by many representatives concerning the nature of the debate. One idea which has been mooted, and passed on to us by certain delegates, is that each geographical region could be represented in the General Discussion by a limited number of delegates who would speak on behalf of groups of countries. This would undoubtedly shorten the debate considerably, and would perhaps dispose of the problem of references to national achievements. In our experience, however, most countries are averse to the idea that their Ministers should have no opportunity to convey in a statement the individual thinking of their Governments.

33. How then, can we adapt to the World Health Assembly the formula which we regard as the most appropriate and which is already successfully applied in UNESCO and FAO? This might be done on the following lines :

- (a) It would be idle to claim that ten minutes gives Ministers enough time to analyse and comment in depth on the many matters covered by the reports of the Executive Board and the Director-General. On the other hand, it is long enough to deal in some detail with a few specially selected items, since it allows almost four double-spaced typewritten pages;
- (b) Since the Assembly is an annual function, the Executive Board, at its January session, might select not more than three major topics for the General Discussion. These would be communicated to the Member States in the Convening Notice, with an indication that, without prejudice to the speakers' right to touch upon any topic they consider necessary, they should make an effort to limit as far as possible references to national activities;
- (c) The focusing of the General Discussion on selected topical subjects would not mean duplication of the Technical Discussions, since the two debates differ from one another in criteria of selection and in purpose (see para. 46). The Technical Discussions deal mainly with scientific and technical matters and aim at an exchange of ideas between the technical experts on the delegations. The aim of the General Discussion would be to enable Governments to put forward at the highest level - if possible at ministerial level - useful ideas for the formulation of the Organization's policies;

- (d) At the close of the General Discussion, the President of the Assembly might make a statement - drafted with the assistance of the Vice-presidents - identifying the main points of agreement. Those points would play an important part in laying down basic guidelines for future programmes;
- (e) With regard to information on national achievements, WHO might seek ways and means of improving the implementation of the provisions of Articles 61 to 65 of the Constitution. To that end, it might be appropriate to send the Member States a more detailed questionnaire and to follow those up with frequent reminders, the replies being published in the "Report on the World Health Situation" and its Supplement. Without prejudice to this arrangement, Heads of delegations wishing to provide information on national activities in their statements in the General Discussion would be invited to give it in writing for inclusion in the record;
- (f) In compliance with Article 18, sub-paragraph (d) of the Constitution, the report of the Director-General - which, as we have seen, is not actually analysed in the General Discussion - might simply be introduced and submitted to the Assembly for approval by means of the usual draft resolution; to that end, the report would have to reach Member States far enough in advance for thorough prior study. If it is still desired to encourage a discussion of the report, an alternative solution would be to add it as a recurrent topic to the subjects to be selected each year by the Executive Board as suggested in item (b) above.
- (g) As for the Report of the Executive Board, since it is specially useful for the examination of the Proposed Programme and Budget Estimates, it could be approved in the Main Committee where this item is discussed.

2) Holding of a debate on future programmes

34. Medium and long-term planning are an imperative need in any modern enterprise. This is acknowledged by the Director-General, in a report to the Executive Board (EB43/36), in the following terms :

"In addition to the desire of the United Nations General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council to have long-range planning of the technical co-operation with Member States by the organizations of the system, there are several current developments that necessitate a longer projection of the WHO programme. The countries themselves are seeking to plan their health services on a long-term basis."

35. Although the Committee of Fourteen has laid down guidelines for organizations within the system in introducing medium and long-term planning (A/7124, para. 29), WHO does not appear, so far, to have found the way to respond fully to the pressure which the Member States bring to bear at each Assembly for the satisfaction of this need. Resolution WHA23.59, adopted at the Twenty-third Assembly, and particularly its operative paragraph 3, are

indicative of this concern, and the records of the debate reveal a prevailing impression that the Organization is behindhand in this respect. All the more so since WHO has been aware of this need since long before the Committee of Fourteen came into being: "Programmes of work covering a specific period", which are planned for five years ahead, were introduced as far back as 1952. These programmes, however, have not been formulated with specific budget estimates for the medium term and provisional estimates for the long term; and the terms themselves do not go beyond five years. In fact they constitute merely a summary of the priority needs of Member States. This is admitted by the Director-General in his report to the Executive Board at its Forty-first session (Official Records No. 165, p.64, para. 2):

"The Executive Board... periodically submits to the World Health Assembly ... a general programme of work for a specific period. Because of the varying health situations throughout the world, such general programmes are more an expression of principles and objectives than detailed plans."

36. The complexity of the subject-matter has prompted the Secretariat to be cautious in undertaking reforms leading to the formulation of genuine medium and long-term plans. As an outcome of the above-mentioned report of the Director-General, and of the recommendations of the Board's Forty-first session, the Twenty-second World Health Assembly approved certain preparatory measures based on the inclusion, in the programme and budget document, of information covering the period 1969-1972 (resolution WHA22.53). In addition it requested the Director-General to explore further the feasibility of providing long-term financial indicators. In response to that request the Director-General submitted a report to the Board at its Forty-fifth session, stressing the difficulties encountered in meeting that requirement and stating that further information would be submitted to the Board at its next session (Official Records No. 181, annex 9).

37. WHO is not alone among the organizations we have studied in finding difficulty in adapting its conception of medium and long-term planning to the guidelines recommended by the Committee of Fourteen. FAO has not yet succeeded in perfecting the necessary machinery either. UNESCO, on the other hand, has made good progress along the lines laid down. As recommended by the Committee of Fourteen, it has officially adopted planning for periods of six years; the

Director-General issues, for consideration by the Conference, an interesting document (see paras. 169-172) outlining a six-year plan; and finally, the General Conference regularly adopts a very detailed resolution on future programmes. ILO, for its part, has also adopted the six-year planning system.

38. To what extent could the World Health Assembly contribute to the formulation of the Organization's future programmes? In our view, it has a primary part to play since it is the supreme organ of the Organization. Under Article 18, sub-paragraph (a), of the Constitution, its function is "to determine the policies of the Organization". It hears the views of Governments, through their Ministers of Health, every year. It would be natural for the ideas put forward by those Ministers in the General Discussion to be used as a basis for the formulation of future world policy in matters of health. On the basis of those fundamental ideas, the structure of the medium and long-term programmes could then be built up from the field, in full accordance with the philosophy of decentralization which is the main feature of the organization.

39. As to periodicity, we do not think that a medium and long-term programme can be formulated every year; not even every two years. But since the Assembly, in its resolution WHA22.53 II 1, decided that in principle WHO should adopt a system of biennial programming, we feel that such a decision is perfectly combinable with the inclusion in the agenda - maybe every six years - of an item which could be entitled "Future programmes". On that occasion the Assembly might have as a basis for discussion a document similar to the C/4 of UNESCO, in which the Director-General would map out a detailed future programme accompanied by budget estimates, taking into account (a) the summing up, by the Presidents of the previous Assemblies, of the basic ideas expressed in the General Discussions, and (b) the reports of the Executive Board on regional proposals for medium and long-term plans. With a view to the harmonization of procedure with other international organizations, this plan could be based on periods of six years (medium term) without prejudice to the idea of tentative projections for a longer term in view of the requirements created by WHO's special field of competence (long-term).

40. The discussion on future programmes might be held either in one of the Main Committees or in Plenary; it would lead to the adoption of a resolution in which the main ideas emerging from the debate would be spelled out, including those prompted by the General Discussion at the current session.

41. This resolution on future programmes would provide the Director-General and the regional offices with basic guidelines for the formulation of the proposed programme and budget.

42. To sum up : if the Assembly, in addition to discharging its constitutional obligation to discuss and approve the annual programme and budget, could find a way to play a guiding role in the formulation of medium and long-term plans, there is no doubt that its proceedings could be more purposeful, since it would assume the role assigned to it by the Constitution: that of the highest authority for determining the policies of the Organization.

3) Institutionalization of the Technical Discussions

43. WHO provides delegations attending its Assembly with an opportunity to hold Technical Discussions on specific topics selected each year by the Executive Board. For the purpose of the Technical Discussions, the participants are divided into groups which discuss particular aspects of the topic chosen; at the Twenty-third Assembly 225 members of the delegations present participated, in eight groups.

44. These meetings are genuine round-table discussions; they provide the participants with a relatively informal setting in which to engage in a dialogue that is regarded, particularly by the delegations of the developing Member States, as extremely useful. However, these discussions do not form an integral part of the Assembly proper; their results are recorded in a report submitted to Plenary, which merely takes note of it. By means of these technical meetings WHO rightly endeavours to give the Assembly a purely scientific occasion that will satisfy those physicians, health administrators and planners, who want to air certain tangible problems of public health in the World Health Assembly but who at times feel frustrated by the Assembly's growing involvement in budgetary and administrative questions.

45. We share the view expressed by the Soviet delegation at the first Plenary meeting of the Twenty-third Assembly, which was supported by many other delegations, that a way should be found of disseminating the results of these discussions in a document that would receive wide circulation. We would go further; we do not see why the Technical Discussions should be incidental to the work of the Assembly proper. They should form an integral part of it.

46. Lastly, the Technical Discussions, as we see them, should be the occasion for the delegations' technical experts from the Ministries of Public Health - especially their young technical experts - to engage in a dialogue on the topics chosen - especially if our suggestions on the General Discussion were to be accepted, in which case the Heads of Delegations might prefer, in the General Discussion, to address themselves to the main lines of health policies.

4) Institution of a debate on the technical aspects of field operations

47. Another area of WHO activities to which we think the World Health Assembly might devote more attention is that of substantive discussion and review of the technical aspects of field operations. As we have pointed out, WHO's main activity is now assistance to developing States through its regional organization, which is the most elaborate in the United Nations system and which is constantly - and rightly - cited as an example. And yet what is achieved in the field is not discussed in detail in the Assembly. This was noted by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions which stated in paragraph 35 of its review of the administrative and management procedures of WHO (A/8031) that :

"intergovernmental organs, and especially the Health Assembly, should be kept fully informed through the Executive Board of the results achieved by WHO in implementing its programmes of assistance to Governments."

48. At the last FAO Conference an item entitled "Field operations" was included in the agenda. The purpose was to give the technical experts on the delegations an opportunity to identify, formulate and appraise Technical Assistance and Special Fund problems, including delays in execution caused by equipment problems; difficulties of recruitment and of reporting procedures; problems connected with training; evaluation and assessment by FAO and inspection by United Nations teams; implications for improved project methodology, follow-up and investment; focusing Special Fund projects on investment and the investment role of IBRD/Area Banks; relations with UNDP, etc.

49. This discussion was a resounding success and was greatly appreciated by all delegations, since the comments were made by technical experts from the countries receiving assistance and who were consequently the best witnesses to the usefulness of the activities carried on by the Organization. It brought out practical ideas which are bound to be of great value to the Secretariat in formulating its future policy on field operations.

50. We think that, in those years in which the World Health Assembly would not be discussing the item on future programmes (as suggested), an item entitled "Field operations" might be included in the agenda for discussion in one of the Main Committees. On the basis of documentation prepared by the Secretariat - but originating at the regional level - including the "Report on the World Health Situation" and its Supplement, experts on the delegations might devote a few meetings to this kind of critical analysis, along the lines that have proved so successful in FAO. In addition, on that occasion the Member States would be able to hold a more thorough discussion than they do at present on the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit which deal with field problems on the country or regional level, on which the opinion of the Regional Committees would be specially valuable.

5) Treatment of administrative matters by the Assembly

51. Because of its constitutional obligations, the legislative meetings cannot avoid the necessity of taking decisions on administrative, financial, co-ordination and legal matters. However, in view of the feeling of frustration to which unduly long discussions of such matters naturally gives rise among physicians who expect scientific questions to have priority in the World Health Assembly, we believe that a further effort, additional to those already made by the Executive Board and the Secretariat through the years, should be made to find ways of solving the problem.

52. As we have maintained in previous reports, we believe that governing bodies - which act as the boards of directors of the specialized agencies - might usefully have greater powers of decision in administrative and financial matters or could, at any rate, process such items to the point where, when they are transmitted to the Assembly, an excessively detailed discussion could be avoided.

53. In the International Labour Conference, for instance, usually no more than two sittings in the relevant Committee deal with budgetary and financial matters, to which should be added two to three sittings in Plenary. The time required by the ILO Conference for discussion of the matters with which it is primarily concerned is such, that comparatively little time is left for administrative and other kindred subjects.

54. It may be argued that in WHO this would raise constitutional problems. For example, the fact that the members of the Executive Board are appointed in their personal capacity and not as government representatives may well restrict this organ's capacity to assume greater responsibilities. Moreover Article 18, sub-paragraph (f), of the WHO Constitution makes it the function of the Assembly "to supervise the financial policies of the Organization and to review and approve the budget".

55. We believe that the first of these responsibilities - which, incidentally, does not appear in the constitutional instruments of UNESCO and FAO - is unrealistic. The supervision of the financial policies of the Organization should in our view be the responsibility of the Board be it only because the concept of "supervision" implies more systematic checking than can be effected by a legislative meeting. We hope that the Executive Board will, anyway, consider the idea, and in the meantime, by way of a contribution to reducing the number of administrative and financial items before the Assembly, we will suggest in a later part of this report (paras. 123-130) the rationalization of certain draft resolutions.

(B) Questions of detail

1) Location

56. The Constitution, adopted nearly a quarter of a century ago, assumes as a matter of course that the World Health Assembly may be held in any part of the world as the Member States see fit. For this reason the Assembly, unlike those of the other organizations studied, must adopt every year a resolution on the subject which, save in exceptional circumstances, repeats that the session shall be held in Geneva.

57. It is natural that WHO should prefer to hold its Assemblies at Geneva, where it has established its Headquarters and where the conference facilities of the Palais des Nations are within easy reach. The cost of holding the Assembly away from Headquarters is very much greater. The cost of the Twenty-second Assembly, estimated at \$451,500, actually came to \$799,500 because it was held at Boston.

58. Although the arrangements in force require the host State to bear all costs in excess of the budgeted cost of holding the session at Geneva, the Organization has to transfer and immobilize personnel which, when the Assembly is convened at Headquarters, renders other services there.

59. We fully realize that the gesture of States which make their territory available for the holding of the World Health Assembly is to be highly appreciated. However, in view of the efforts made by the United Nations system to expand the conference facilities at Geneva, and having regard to the financial advantages to be gained, we consider that for reasons of operational convenience and economy the holding of the Assembly away from headquarters should not be encouraged. With those considerations in mind, some thought might be given to make it the normal practice for the World Health Assembly to meet at Geneva without having to take each time a formal decision to this effect, while leaving open the possibility of convening sessions away from Headquarters when the Assembly adopts an express resolution to that effect.

2) Convening the sessions

60. The Assembly meets annually in May. The notices convening the session are preceded by a circular sent to Member States at the beginning of November and are communicated officially by the Director-General, together with the provisional agenda, early in March, sixty days before the opening of the session. One month before the opening date, WHO sends the Member States a preliminary issue of the Assembly Journal, which provides delegations with useful information concerning their arrival, credentials and the distribution of documents.

61. The preliminary Journal of the Twenty-third Assembly also included a tentative programme of work with particulars of the meetings to be held during the first week of the Assembly. This was followed by a reference to the difficulty of foreseeing what the programme of work might be during the second and third weeks of the session, to which tentative dates for the elections to the Board and for the last meeting of the Technical Discussions were added. No references were made to the closing date of the session.

62. UNESCO and FAO send their Member States, well in advance, a detailed and attractively presented chart showing the exact schedule of meetings for the legislative session, the precise daily time-table for each committee, and the closing date; WHO used to follow this practice; it no longer does so.

63. These charts are extremely useful to the delegates as a guide in making their travel plans and in assigning representatives to the various bodies. Moreover their very existence is a psychological aid to the Chairmen and

Secretariat in their efforts to stick to the schedule. As the session proceeds, the time-table may have to be adjusted for unforeseen reasons. When this occurs in FAO, a corrected chart is circulated three or four days in advance.

3) Duration

64. The Twenty-third Assembly opened in the morning of Tuesday, 5 May, and finished its work at noon on Friday, 22 May. This represented eighteen consecutive days or fourteen and a half working days, since the World Health Assembly, like the legislative conferences of FAO and the ILO, meets on Saturday mornings and does not break off on national holidays.

65. As the delegates of several developing countries pointed out to us during the Twenty-third Assembly, sending representatives from distant States involves heavy expenditure on travel (although WHO pays one delegate's fare) and subsistence. They added that some of the smaller public health administrations find themselves in difficulties when senior officials have to remain away from their posts for a great length of time.

66. On the basis of the United Nations per diem rate for the Geneva area and an average of four members per delegation attending the Twenty-third Assembly, the cost of residence at Geneva during the session can be calculated at \$1,500 for a four-man delegation present throughout the session. This is usually the case for developing countries which, unlike most of the European countries, are unable to replace their delegates in the course of the Assembly as successive agenda items are taken up. This figure does not include travel fares.

67. The duration of the Assembly has been a source of concern to the Executive Board for some time. Between 1952 and 1967 the Board adopted eight resolutions proposing measures to shorten the Assembly, which were approved in due course by the Sixth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Twentieth Assemblies.

68. As a result, despite the increase in activities, the sessions became gradually shorter and the Twentieth and Twenty-first Assemblies took only nineteen consecutive days, while the Twenty-second and Twenty-third took eighteen. The legislative meeting of the ILO - which holds annual sessions - lasted an average of twenty-two days over the same period of years.

4) Agenda

69. The number of items on the agenda of the Twenty-third Assembly was 66, a figure close to that for the Twenty-second Assembly (65 items) but smaller than those for the Twenty-first Assembly (68 items) and the Twentieth Assembly (69 items). It exceeds, however, those for the Fifteenth session of the UNESCO General Conference (47 items) and the Fifteenth session of the FAO Conference (46 items), despite the fact that these are biennial conferences and the organizations have more diversified programmes.

70. How is it possible, then, for the World Health Assembly to be shorter than the conferences of the ILO, UNESCO and FAO? Partly because the last two are biennial conferences but mainly because all three devote more time than WHO to discussing questions relating to the substantive aspects of their programmes; there are less administrative, financial and legal questions. On the agenda of the Twenty-third Health Assembly, for instance, questions of this nature accounted for 50 per cent of the items; formal ceremonies, elections and the like accounted for 25 per cent; and only 25 per cent related to the Organization's work programme.

5) Participants

71. Of the 128 Member States invited to the Twenty-third Assembly, 122 participated, together with two Associate Member States. The Constitution provides that each Member shall be represented by not more than three delegates, who may be accompanied by alternates and advisers (Arts. 11 and 12).

72. The level of official representation of Member States at the Twenty-third Assembly was very high: some 79 delegations were headed by the Ministers of Health or persons of equivalent rank and status in their national Governments. About ten other delegations were headed by their countries' Ambassadors in Geneva, and the rest by the chiefs of their national health services. The most impressive point was the presence of so many heads of health services (about 112).

73. WHO is the only one of the big four specialized agencies to pay one first-class fare per delegation to its legislative conference; this costs the Organization a total of \$120,200 a year, or 26.62 per cent of the appropriation for the World Health Assembly in 1970.

74. This custom is a great help to the developing countries and should guarantee 100 per cent attendance by the Member States. This, however, is not the case, the number of delegations absent being not less than at the legislative conferences of other comparable organizations.

75. The average number of delegates attending the Twenty-third Assembly was four members per delegation; but if we consider only the eighty-eight delegations that can be regarded as belonging to developing countries, the average number drops to just over three : twenty-nine of these delegations sent two delegates each and four only one.

76. Many Member States take advantage of the presence of their Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva by adding to their technical delegations to the Assembly the Permanent Representative himself or other members of the Mission, as advisers. At the Twenty-third Assembly twenty-eight delegations did so.

77. Although no more than two full membership meetings take place at the same time, a two-man delegation has hardly the time to study all the documents presented to them or to prepare themselves for effective participation. Not to mention the fact that some delegates must work in the Committees as office bearers. We feel that this is a point that would benefit from a clarification to Member States. It is quite possible that the wording of the first line of Article 11 of the Constitution is in fact misleading: the words "not more than" could be interpreted by Governments as a limiting factor.

78. But we are aware of the difficulties involved in amending the Constitution of WHO and would therefore prefer to suggest an alternative means of remedying the above problems. The Director-General's letter convening the Twenty-third World Health Assembly gave the Member States some information about the session and enclosed a number of documents on relevant resolutions. We would suggest that this letter and the advance notice should include a note to the effect that although not more than two full membership meetings will be held simultaneously, delegations composed of at least three members, advisers included, would be necessary for their effective participation in the work of the Assembly.

79. We feel further, that Governments should be given more advanced notice as to the venue of the Assembly. The notice convening the Twenty-third Assembly was dated Friday, 6 March; it is quite likely that the competent Ministries of many States did not receive it until late in that month, i.e. only five to six weeks before the beginning of the session. Such short notice may make it difficult to set the administrative machinery in motion in time to

form a fully staffed delegation. It might be preferable to send out an advance letter explaining the various relevant points by February at the latest, without prejudice to repetition of these points in the formal convening notice.

6) Proceedings

80. The Assembly, like the other legislative bodies, normally divides its work between Plenary and Committee meetings, all of them of full membership. To these must be added the traditional organs with a more restricted membership, such as the General Committee, the Committee on Credentials and the Committee on Nominations. Lastly, a number of special committees are set up in which the Technical Discussions take place, WHO has succeeded in making exemplary practical arrangements for Assembly organs of limited membership to meet outside the normal working hours of the main organs.

81. However, despite its use of the admittedly "elastic" facilities of the Palais des Nations, WHO has taken the position that only two full membership organs of its Assembly may meet simultaneously. In addition it has adopted the unique practice of suspending the work of the Committees whenever the Assembly is meeting in the Plenary. This is one of the main reasons why the Assembly has needed extra time and has had to hold night meetings.

82. In the draft resolution which the Executive Board submitted to the Twenty-third Assembly on its methods of work (EB45.R28(2)), the Board seemed to have this problem in mind when it recommended that one of the Main Committees should be allowed to meet not only during the General Discussion in Plenary, but also while the Technical Discussions were being held.

83. When the question was discussed at the Assembly, objection was raised against that recommendation, mainly because it would affect one-man delegations and the Executive Board's text was amended to provide that neither Main Committee should meet while Plenary meetings or Technical Discussions were in session.

84. With all due respect, we venture to suggest that the original proposal of the Executive Board would have rendered the Assembly's proceedings brisker, made an across-the-board cut in working hours and avoided night sessions, thus increasing the efficiency of the whole legislative session.

85. We do recognize, however, that excessive diversification of full membership meetings may be a serious handicap in a legislative conference, since many developing countries have great difficulty in sending large delegations. We criticized this tendency in our reports on UNESCO and FAO, whose legislative conferences feature four full-membership organs, three of which meet simultaneously. In both cases the committees dealing solely with legal and administrative matters suffer from unduly low attendance.

86. Nevertheless, the other extreme, as it is practised in WHO, might be no less harmful; and since, at the World Health Assembly, the attendance at two simultaneous meetings, such as those of Committees A and B, is excellent, we do not see why the Plenary and at least one of the Main Committees should not be allowed to meet on occasion simultaneously. We believe that instead of matching its arrangements to the circumstances of those countries that can send only one delegate - a sharply declining number anyway, as can be seen from the chart that follows - WHO should take the opposite course of encouraging Member States to make an effort to send at least three delegates to each Assembly session.

	Membership	One Man delegations	Percentage
1964	119	16	13.4
1966	123	11	8.9
1968	127	10	7.9
1970	128	4	3.1

87. The principle that Technical Discussions should not coincide with the meetings of other organs seems to us justified in the case of the Main Committees, which should normally be attended by the same delegates. On the other hand, we consider that, if necessary in the interests of better organization of the Assembly's activities and in order to avoid night meetings, there is no reason why some Plenary meetings should not be held at the same time as the Technical Discussions, since normally the former are attended by Heads of delegations.

7) Opening plenary meetings

88. The Assembly has adopted the practice of beginning its work on a Tuesday at 10 a.m., leaving the Monday free for the delegates to organize their work, make the necessary contacts and so on. This is a sound precaution and particularly so in the case of the World Health Assembly, which for the time being does not seem to think it necessary to shorten its sessions by saving a day or two.

89. The opening ceremonies of the Health Assembly are as a rule of exemplary brevity, they consist of short addresses by the outgoing President, the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and the representative of the host Government. At the Twenty-third Session they took exactly thirty-five minutes.

90. After these formal ceremonies, the Assembly must appoint the members of the Committee on Credentials and elect those of the Committee on Nominations on the proposal of the President. If - as is usually the case at all legislative conferences - the Assembly has no objection to his proposals, which are made with strict attention to equitable geographical distribution, these proceedings are also swiftly concluded, so that the opening meeting need not take more than one hour all told.

91. However, the Twenty-third Assembly encountered problems in this connexion and a vote had to be taken - a most unusual course in proceedings of this nature. This led to an appallingly slow process of vote-counting, and the result was not announced until 2.35 p.m.

92. This problem upset the business-like arrangements which the Assembly has made for the proceedings of the Committee on Nominations, and which are a great improvement on the practice of the other specialized agencies. This Committee is usually elected at the opening meeting before noon, meets as soon as the Plenary meeting rises, and carries on without a lunch break - the members of the Committee on Nominations are served with a cold lunch at their desks - until it has adopted its reports on nominations for the offices of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteurs of the Main Committees and the members of the General Committee.

93. This enables the Assembly to complete its work promptly in the afternoon, so that the General Committee can meet and decide on the immediate programme of work.

94. It is difficult to forestall a situation of the kind that arose in connexion with the election of the Committee on Nominations. The way to avoid it might be that adopted by FAO, which has established an excellent time-saving practice of having the Council, prior to the opening of the Conference, nominate the President of the legislative conference and the Chairman of the Commissions, and elect the Nominations Committee. The only alternative solution is to ensure that the outgoing President consults actively with the representatives of the various geographical groups so as to obtain their consent to the suggestions he proposes to make.

95. From this analysis of the Assembly's opening meetings it will be seen that under normal conditions it works on the first day (Tuesday) actually for only an hour and a half in the morning and about half an hour in the afternoon.

96. We believe that, given the normal operation of the arrangements whereby the Committee on Nominations is elected in the morning and submits its report at the beginning of the afternoon meeting, matters could be advanced by fitting into the first day's meetings some proceedings which at the Twenty-third Assembly were carried out later and caused some loss of time.

97. For instance, the new President might be able to deliver his address immediately after his election, instead of waiting until the next day. That would enable the Assembly to take up its work at the third Plenary meeting, on the Wednesday morning. Naturally, this arrangement would be greatly facilitated if the nomination of the President resulted from a process such as that followed in UNESCO and FAO, where the names of candidates are known long before the legislative conference opens and the candidate is nominated by the governing bodies.

98. In addition, it seems to us that such formal ceremonies as the award of the Léon Bernard Foundation and Dr. A.T. Sousha Foundation Medals and Prizes, which at the Twenty-third Assembly took place separately after the discussion at the ninth and tenth Plenary meetings, could be shorter and held at some point during the opening ceremonies, perhaps in the morning of the first day.

99. The following advantages would result:

- (i) The solemnity of these formal ceremonies, which are important occasions, would be enhanced by becoming part of the opening of the Assembly, a major event which, unlike subsequent meetings, is attended by a great many Ministers, high officials, journalists and members of the public;

- (ii) Roughly an hour and a half could be saved (this was the time taken up by these ceremonies at the Twenty-third Assembly when they were held separately at two working meetings).

100. Lastly, we wish to mention that, under the existing layout of the Plenary meeting hall, the Vice-Presidents are seated throughout the session on a platform facing the hall. While this arrangement is an acknowledgement of the importance of their office, we believe that it restricts their potential freedom of movement as Heads of delegations. This seating arrangement might perhaps be confined, therefore, to the opening meeting.

8) Voting

101. At the first Plenary meeting the vote-counting was extremely slow and as a result several hours were lost.

102. The head of the Belgian delegation stated during the General discussion (A23/VR/4) :

"I should like first of all to draw the Director-General's attention to ways of increasing the efficiency of our Assembly, for example, by making use, if possible, of the WHO computer in counting the votes cast in the Assembly."

103. This question merits urgent consideration. As a further measure we feel that, when any vote is taken in the Plenary sessions, the Main Committees should be allowed to continue their work without interruption.

9) Main committees

104. It is in the Main Committees that the real work of the Assembly is done. In the past, the various agenda items were distributed between two committees called the Committee on Programme and Budget and the Committee on Administration, Finance and Legal Matters. Since this arrangement resulted in an unequal division of the workload, the Executive Board studied and endorsed certain changes suggested by the Director-General (document EB45/22). It was proposed that the distribution should not be based solely on the nature of the items, but also on the need for the Committees to work at a similar speed and intensity and to finish their sessions at more or less the same time. The Committees would be renamed simply Committee A and Committee B.

105. The proposed changes were submitted to the Twenty-third Assembly which approved them in resolution WHA23.1. The results are shown below :

	<u>Committee A</u>		<u>Committee B</u>	
	<u>Meetings</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Meetings</u>	<u>Hours</u>
1969	25	64	11	25
1970	18	43	17	40

106. These results shows that the changes made have balanced the workload of the two Committees. Delegations for their part, have found the experiment satisfactory. We shall hereunder comment on various matters relating to these Committees.

107. (a) Officers : We noted that some elected officers of the Committees had to relinquish their post when these were halfway through their work in order to return to their countries : the Chairman of one of the Committees had to withdraw at its eighth meeting, and the Rapporteur of the other at its seventh meeting with the result, in this case, that new elections had to be held.

108. With all due respect for the reasons of force majeure invoked, it seems to us that such cases could be forestalled if in the future only delegates who can stay until the end of the session accept nomination for responsible office in the Assembly. The posts filled by the Officers of the Committees carry great responsibilities and, generally speaking, the persons nominated are chosen because of their experience and the contribution this can make to the success of the proceedings.

109. (b) Working hours : Tribute should be paid to the extraordinary punctuality with which meetings of the World Health Assembly begin and end, which is without parallel in the other legislative bodies of the UN family. To provide a respite for delegates and secretariat staff, a break of fifteen minutes is taken in the morning and in the afternoon, when coffee and bar services are at hand for the participants. These breaks also afford a convenient opportunity for the exchange of ideas among delegates on the work in progress.

110. When the Main Committees started their work, it was announced that they would meet from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon or 12.30 p.m. and from 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., with the proviso that their hours would depend in practice on the progress made.

111. In practice it soon became clear that frequent changes would have to be made in the time-table and that night sessions would have to be held.

112. The Committees abandoned 9.30 a.m. as their starting time as early as their second morning. Starting time was advanced to 9.15 a.m., and in certain cases to 9 a.m. The starting time for the afternoon meetings, on the other hand, remained unchanged, as did the closing time of the meetings.

113. Several Main Committee meetings were held at irregular hours on account of the WHO custom that they do not meet at the same time as the Plenary. As a result, the sixth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and thirteenth meetings of both Committees were shortened, either by beginning late or by rising early. As a result, each Committee lost a total of approximately seven hours working time.

114. (c) Time-limits for speeches : It has already been mentioned that WHO has adopted the practice of limiting the time allowed for statements in the General Discussion. This experiment is proving successful, partly because a warning light comes on when the ten minutes are up.

115. Although delegates are invited to limit the length of their statements in the Main Committees (resolutions EB43.R.45, EB45.R.28 and WHA23.1, paragraph 3), the appeal which the Chairman makes to that effect at the beginning of the session is not based on a specific time-limit, as is the case in the Plenary sessions.

116. Consequently the time taken by delegates varies; nevertheless, as a rule their statements are fairly brief, since they doubtless try to comply with the Chairman's appeal. When certain controversial items come up for discussion, however, the lack of a definite time-limit and of a light signal undoubtedly makes for longer speeches and these in turn make great inroads in the Committees' allotted time.

117. UNESCO has adopted the practice of limiting statements made in the main commissions of its General Conference to ten minutes; FAO, at its last Conference, was compelled a few days after its main commissions started work to adopt a time-limit of six minutes.

118. In order that the request made in resolution WHA23.1 be duly observed, the Committee's Chairmen might in future reinforce their traditional appeal by recommending the adoption, as a working rule, of a time-limit of six minutes, which represents approximately 800 words on two unbroken double-spaced typed pages read at normal speed.

119. (d) Night sessions : At the Twenty-third Assembly three night sessions (one Plenary and two Committee meetings) were held, as against five in 1969, three in 1968 and none in 1967.

120. Such meetings are extremely unpopular with delegations for obvious reasons, and constitute an extreme measure which the international organizations try to avoid. They are particularly tiring in that they follow upon days of hard work, and are poorly attended by the delegates, as witness the fact that the average attendance of eighty delegates at the meetings of Committee A and of seventy-four at those of Committee B dropped to fifty-five and forty-five, respectively, at the night sessions; indeed in the latter case, the quorum of one-third was barely attained.

121. In WHO the question of night sessions has aroused the concern of delegates. The Executive Board attempted to meet that concern by recommending in resolution EB39.R46 that they should be banned; but this attempt was unsuccessful.

122. The total duration of the proceedings at the three night meetings of the Twenty-third Assembly came to five hours and forty-five minutes; by way of contrast, the total number of hours lost by the two Main Committees through not meeting at the same time as the Plenary was approximately fourteen. The five hours and forty-five minutes of night meetings would not have been necessary if at least one Main Committee at a time had been allowed to meet simultaneously with the Plenary Sessions.

10) Resolutions

123. The decisions of the World Health Assembly are adopted in the form of resolutions, on the basis of draft texts originating from three main sources:

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1968</u>
(i) Submitted by Member States:	24	23	17
(ii) Submitted by the Executive Board:	10	8	10
(iii) Prepared by the Secretariat:	28	25	24
	<hr/> 62	<hr/> 56	<hr/> 51

124. This method of adopting and recording the Health Assembly's decisions is midway between the UNESCO system and that of FAO, and is the clearest and simplest of the three systems. By including only one draft resolution in the document on the proposed programme and budget, WHO avoids the flood of draft texts and amendments which swamps UNESCO and which then gives rise to lengthy discussions of detail during its General Conference. FAO, to avoid the proliferation of draft resolutions, records the decisions of its Conference in a few resolutions and, essentially, in reports describing the meetings of its main commissions, and this too gives rise to prolonged discussions on drafting.

125. The World Health Assembly does not produce reports describing the work of its Committees, and the number of resolutions is not excessively great. On the other hand, it is a striking fact that of the sixty-two resolutions adopted by the Twenty-third Assembly only twenty-two, or 34 per cent, related to questions that could be described as scientific; the remainder were concerned with administrative, co-ordination, constitutional, procedural or electoral questions.

126. We believe that some effort could be made to rationalize the number of draft resolutions. For example, the award of the Léon Bernard Foundation and Dr. A.T. Shousha Foundation Prizes and Medals and the decision confirming Geneva as the annual meeting-place of the Assembly entail the production of recurrent texts of resolutions that hardly seem indispensable. Resolutions WHA23.19, WHA23.21, WHA23.30, WHA23.38, WHA23.55 and WHA23.56 of the Twenty-third Assembly relate to miscellaneous matters on which, in our opinion, all the details could be settled at the level of the Executive Board. They could be approved by the Assembly upon the adoption of the general resolution (WHA23.54) approving the reports of the Executive Board. If any of the matters dealt with in those resolutions should warrant specific comment, this could be made by the representative of the Board in his oral introduction to the reports, in order to bring it to the Assembly's attention. Such a procedure would help to keep the Assembly from being distracted by routine administrative questions.

127. Resolution WHA23.6, on the status of collection of annual contributions and of advances to the Working Capital Fund, and resolution WHA23.39 could perhaps have been dealt with together and combined in one resolution. The same might apply to resolutions WHA23.14, 15, 16 and 17 on the Real Estate Fund.

128. Among the actual texts only a few have too many preambular paragraphs. Resolution WHA23.50, on the health hazards of food additives, is an example of a straightforward, forceful resolution; resolution WHA23.36, on community water supply, on the other hand, is an example of the opposite. The Secretariat and other sources of draft resolutions should endeavour to make their texts as simple as possible.

129. The examples we have cited as being open to rationalization may not be the most pertinent, and we recognize that there may be good reasons why more than one of the resolutions referred to are deemed indispensable; but we

believe that, if an effort is made along the lines we have indicated, the amount of paper confronting the Assembly - always a sore trial to delegates - could be reduced, the number of items on the agenda cut down, and the most telling criticism levelled against the Assembly - that it devotes too much time to administrative matters - might be mitigated.

130. Lastly it should be mentioned that, elsewhere in this report, we propose new procedures for the resolutions approving the reports of the Executive Board and the Director-General (paras. 33 (vi) and (vii)) and suggest that the Assembly should discuss a new draft resolution on future programmes (paras. 40-41).

11) Reports of the Committees

131. In the United Nations, UNESCO, FAO and the ILO, the reports of the Main organs of the legislative conference consist of an account of their proceedings and the text of the draft resolutions proposed, all of which are submitted to the Plenary for final adoption towards the end of the session. In WHO the Committees include in their reports only the texts of the resolutions proposed and rely on the records for the account of proceedings. These "reports" are reproduced twice, in draft and final form, before they are submitted to the Plenary; the texts are identical. At the Twenty-third Assembly Committees A and B produced eight reports each.

132. We believe that WHO's practice of omitting any account of the proceedings from the Committee reports is both sound and workmanlike; in addition it helps to cut down the volume of documentation.

133. We consider, however, that the operation could be simplified even further. In the first place, a draft report is very rarely amended by the Committee concerned, since it contains already approved draft resolutions. Indeed at the Twenty-third Assembly this did not happen at all. In the second place, we see no reason why these reports should be submitted to the Plenary piecemeal there to be crammed into whatever business the Plenary happens to be engaged in. At the Twenty-third Assembly, two Plenary meetings, the fourteenth and fifteenth, were spent almost entirely on these reports, which meant that each Main Committee lost an hour's working time because they did not meet at the same time as the Plenary.

134. In our opinion, the operation would be simpler and more effective if:-

- (a) The texts of all the resolutions approved by the Main Committee were submitted together at a Plenary session towards the end of the Assembly. If, for constitutional reasons, a particular resolution had to be approved by the Plenary at an earlier stage, an exception could be made to the rule;
- (b) A single text was reproduced, embodying the report of each Main Committee, containing all the resolutions proposed by it. When this text was submitted to the Plenary at some point in the last two days of the Session, delegates wishing to speak on any resolution might do so in the order in which the resolutions appear in the report;
- (c) The reports which one Committee was required to transmit to the other, in accordance with the arrangements introduced at the Twenty-third Assembly, were issued in the usual way, with the difference that, once the draft report was approved, it need not be reproduced again in final form unless some amendment made it necessary to issue a corrigendum.

135. We see the following advantages in these proposals:-

- (a) The Committees would not be obliged to suspend their work from time to time while the Plenary approves their reports. The Plenary would also save time, since it would be quicker and more practical to approve a series of resolutions at one sitting than to deal with them piecemeal, on successive occasions;
- (b) The paperwork would be reduced by eliminating the reproduction of draft reports and final reports containing groups of resolutions proposed by the Committees.

136. As to the organs of limited membership, such as the General Committee, the Committee on Credentials and the Committee on Nominations, we find the existing practice for dealing with their reports satisfactory, although some simplification could be envisaged in the procedures of the latter body, which following its first meeting at the Twenty-third Session, issued two reports with proposals for the main officers of the Assembly instead of one.

12) Role of the Executive Board

137. In view of the interrelationship of the functions of the Executive Board with those of the Assembly, in analysing the latter's methods of work we have perforce had to refer to the Board in connexion with:-

- (a) The examination of the Board's reports in the General Discussion (paras. 25-33; 33 (vii));
- (b) The choice of topics for the General Discussion (para. 33);

- (c) The debate on future programmes (para. 39);
- (d) The Assembly's preoccupation with administrative and financial questions (paras. 51-55; 126);
- (e) The nomination of main officers of the Assembly (paras. 94-97).

138. On dealing with questions relating to items (e) and (d), we pointed out that some of the additional activities we were suggesting for the Board might give rise to constitutional problems, since they entailed the assumption of new responsibilities which perhaps went beyond those proper to a body not composed of Government representatives.

139. As regards the role played by the Board during the Assembly, we note that the latter benefits from an excellent practice: the Board appoints two representatives to follow all the proceedings of the Plenary meetings and of the Main Committees. When certain items falling within the competence of the Board are taken up, these representatives state the views of the governing body, and this is extremely helpful in focusing the attention of the delegates on the salient points; in addition, the Board's representatives are at the disposal of the meeting to deal with any inquiries. At the Twenty-third Assembly Dr. B. Layton and Dr. B. Juricic were assigned to Committees A and B, respectively, and their statements were of great assistance in guiding the discussions.

140. Lastly, it should be mentioned that the documents containing the reports of the Executive Board are worthy of special praise. Their contents are superior in presentation, structure and accuracy to those of the corresponding documents of other comparable agencies.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

141. Documentation is one of the most important aspects of legislative meetings not only because of its growing volume and financial implications, (In WHO it accounts for 71.3 per cent of the total cost of the Twenty-third Health Assembly), but on account of its influence on the intelligibility and smooth conduct of the proceedings.

1) Cost

142. The Secretariat has supplied the following figures on the cost of documentation for the Twenty-third Assembly, subject to the reservation stated in footnote 2 on page 4. It should be added that these figures do not take into account the time spent by the authors in drafting the documents or the overhead expenses, with the result that they may represent less than the real cost.

Translation	\$203,209
Typing	\$129,456
Printing of official records.	\$200,238
Production and distribution .	\$ 29,926
	<u>\$566,829</u>

143. The comparatively high cost of the Assembly's documentation is in part imputable to the expenses incurred in the "Official Records" series: the total cost of No. 179 "Proposed Regular Programme and Budget" alone, was estimated at \$124,477.

2) List of documents

144. Contrary to the practice followed in the Economic and Social Council and in the specialized agencies we have studied where, as a rule, a list of work documents is circulated well in advance, as well as that of the ILO, where the list of main documents appears in the draft programme and budget, a full year ahead, WHO does not circulate a specific list of the Assembly's documents before the opening of the session. Not until the last day of the Assembly did WHO issue a document entitled "Final list of documents", which was by then of internal value only.

145. Apart from the fact that publication of such a list gives the impression that the Secretariat is planning ahead, it is very useful for Member States to know beforehand what documents they are going to have to deal with.

3) Distribution

146. Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure provides that all documents relating to the agenda shall be sent to Member States at the same time as the agenda or as soon thereafter as possible; since, under rules 3 and 4, the agenda must be circulated not less than sixty days before the date fixed for the opening of the Assembly, the time-limit for the circulation of working documents for the Twenty-third Assembly was 5 March 1970.

147. If the time-limit of sixty days is observed, Ministries have sufficient time to study the documents and prepare instructions for their delegations to the legislative conference, even though at least a week may elapse between the date of dispatch and the date of receipt in the most distant countries.

148. A study of the distribution of the documents for the Twenty-third Assembly reveals that it was greatly delayed. As the Soviet Representative noted (A23/VR1):

"... Of recent years these working documents are being prepared late. We fear that as a result a number of delegations, particularly small delegations, will experience some difficulty in studying these documents".

149. The Head of the delegation of Guinea, for his part, stated (A23/VR9):

"... His delegation regrets that it was not in possession at a more suitable moment of the documents of the present session as well as the documents incorporated in the Official Records.... Nevertheless our delegation has endeavoured to take cognizance of the arrangements decided upon..."

150. These feelings were expressed particularly in a specific case: Resolution WHA23.5, requests the Director-General "to undertake so far as possible all necessary measures to distribute in good time to Member States the Financial Report and the Report of the External Auditors".

151. In fact, by 5 March, only one of the five preparatory documents in the Official Records series connected with the Assembly had been sent to Member States, viz No. 179, "Proposed Programme and Budget Estimates for 1971". The situation was similar with regard to the working documents containing specific reports which are indispensable for the discussion of agenda items. This meant that 70 per cent of all 57 preparatory documents for the Assembly (5 Official Records and 42 P and B and AFL + 5 Technical Discussions' documents) were distributed only during the Session.

152. It is clear that compliance with the sixty-date rule is far from being observed and that the escape clause in rule 14 - "as soon thereafter as possible" - has in practice become the general rule. This situation with regard to the later circulation of documents is more critical in WHO than in other organizations. One reason may be that, since the World Health Assembly is held annually, the pressure of time is more severely felt: nevertheless, in the Economic and Social Council of the UN and in the ILO, documents are generally circulated earlier than in WHO.

153. It would certainly be desirable to find a solution to this problem, perhaps through greater efforts on the part of the Secretariat to prepare the documents earlier and by postponing the time-limit laid down in the rules of procedure to, say, six weeks (as is the case in the Economic and Social Council). Furthermore, the wording in rule 14 regarding the circulation of documents "as soon thereafter as possible" could be replaced by something less open to over-liberal interpretation.

4) Qualitative analysis

154. WHO stands out among comparable international organizations for the impeccable presentation of its printed documents. The descriptive matter is drafted in a straightforward way, and every effort is made to present the statistical material as intelligibly as possible. The working documentation that the delegates have to consult for the Assembly is divided into two categories: (a) the basic documents issued in printed form and (b) various documents issued in offset.

155. (a) Printed documents : The main documents printed annually are the Proposed Regular Programme and Budget Estimates for the Financial Year; The Work of WHO (annual report of the Director-General); the two reports of the Executive Board; the Financial Report and Report of the External Auditor; and the Proceedings of the World Health Assembly.

156. These documents are issued in a series entitled Official Records, and bear a serial number which is used by the Secretariat and at the meetings as a permanent reference number, making it easy to find any item of information over the years. The series has a uniform binding and the typography is of high quality. It is published in four languages and is on sale to the public.

157. We should like to mention a useful feature of this series of documents which, apart from the merits already described, might serve as an example to other organizations : the volumes containing the resolutions of the Assembly and Executive Board sessions include as annexes the complete text of the working documents of permanent interest submitted to the two organs. Access to information on the background to the resolutions is thus provided in the most practical possible form.

158. Next, mention should be made of two other documents which are likewise very well presented and useful to delegations : the first entitled Basic Documents, is published annually. For practical reasons this has been given a small format; it contains the constitutional texts, the rules of procedure of the two principal organs, and the agreements with other international organizations.

159. The second is the Handbook of Resolutions and Decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board, a biennial publication setting forth by subject, in full or summary form, all the resolutions adopted by the legislative meeting and the Board of WHO from its inception. It has a subject index and a numerical index, which have been drawn up with great attention to accuracy and detail. This publication, 544 pages long and only 2 centimetres thick, is unique among those of the comparable international organizations and, of course, extremely useful. Lastly, WHO distributes, at the opening of the Assembly, an excellent booklet, the Guide Book for Delegates, with practical information for those attending it.

160. (b) Documents in offset : Apart from the Official Records, the Assembly generates a variety of working documents, technical and administrative reports, background papers, draft resolutions, reports of deliberative organs, etc. The offset reproduction of these documents is of excellent quality and their contents are drafted in a straightforward style.

161. It may perhaps be in order to mention that FAO issues its working documents in a different colour for each language, thus making it easier for delegates and staff to sort, distribute and keep the documentation during the session than were they swamped by a flood of undifferentiated paper.

5) Quantitative analysis

162. Since 70 per cent of the World Health Assembly's working documents, which in other organizations would be classified as preparatory documents, are circulated while the session is already in progress, there is no point in

attempting to determine the volume of documentation by applying the classification used in the United Nations and the specialized agencies previously studied, and which divides the documentation into (a) pre-session (b) in-session and (c) post-session documents.

163. We shall therefore give by way of illustration some comparative figures, without distinguishing between pre-session and in-session documents. The following table gives an idea of the number of documents and of pages in a complete set of documents circulated before and during two successive Assemblies :

	<u>1970</u>	<u>1968</u>
Number of documents	276	299
Number of pages ^{1/}	4,072	4,132

164. These figures show that despite the increase in its activities over the two-year period, WHO has made an effort to reduce the number of documents and of pages.

165. There follows a comparison with the other agencies studied.

	<u>WHO</u>	<u>FAO</u>	<u>UNESCO</u>
	<u>1970</u>	<u>1969</u>	<u>1968</u>
Number of documents	276	236	571
Number of pages ^{1/}	4,072	4,644	6,000

166. These figures are of course affected by the fact that FAO and UNESCO hold their meetings biennially.

167. In order to analyse in some detail the volume of papers, one should distinguish between different categories of documents :

- (a) Official Records, Handbook of Resolutions and Decisions, and Basic Documents : the bulky nature of the first two is justified by the value of the information they contain.
- (b) Documents on organization, matters of procedure, awards and presentations, and elections : agenda, lists of delegates, admission of new Member States, Foundation Prizes, election of members of the Executive Board, Journal of the Assembly, etc. The number of such documents is normal.

^{1/} Since these figures are intended to indicate the total number of pages which in theory, a Head of delegation would be obliged to read, we have added together, both in the case of WHO and in that of the other agencies, the number of pages in printed documents and the number of pages in documents issued in offset, although there is of course a difference between printing and offset in the number of words per page.

- (c) Basic technical documents for the deliberations of the Main Committees and for the Technical Discussions : twenty-one documents in the P and B series, mainly on scientific subjects; twenty-four in the AFL series on administrative, financial and legal matters; and two for the Technical Discussions, totalling forty-seven. These were not excessive either in number or in individual volume. If a reduction could be made in the number of administrative and financial items, the number of documents in the AFL series would of course decrease accordingly.
- (d) Draft resolutions : the number of documents is reasonably small since a majority of draft resolutions originate from the Executive Board and the Secretariat and are printed in the relevant Official Records.
- (e) Resolutions adopted : As the resolutions are adopted they are reproduced on separate sheets. There were sixty-two of these at the Twenty-third Assembly, forming, in our opinion, an unnecessary extra stack of papers. Since the same text is given (i) in the draft reports of each Main Committee, (ii) again in the final report, and (iii) in the Official Records setting forth the work of the Assembly.
- (f) Draft reports and final reports of the various organs : Forty-six documents were issued in this category, including seventeen final reports of the Main Committees which were exact replicas of the corresponding draft reports. Some organs like the Nominations Committee unnecessarily split up their reports into several sections.
- (g) Records : Seventeen verbatim records of the Plenary meetings, thirty-five summary records of the Main Committees and eleven summary records of the General Committee were issued.
- (h) Miscellaneous papers : Letters from the Director-General, notices, etc. These are few in number.

168. In short, it is our impression that WHO produces a reasonable number of basic technical documents for discussion and that these are concise. On the other hand, we feel that an effort should be made to rationalize two features : the repeated reproduction of resolutions, and the undue fragmentation and proliferation of the reports of the various organs, to which we drew attention in paras. 131-136. If this could be achieved, the total of 228 documents which were placed in the pigeon-holes at the Twenty-third Assembly could be greatly reduced, perhaps to half that figure; which would lighten the burden both of the staff engaged in their reproduction and distribution, and of the already sorely taxed delegates.

6) Document on future programmes

169. In stating our views on medium and long-term plans (paras. 34-42) we pointed out that for the discussion of the future programmes, it would be very useful for delegates to be able to refer to a specially prepared document. We mentioned, for instance, that in UNESCO the Director-General had issued for the Sixteenth session of the General Conference a document containing the outline of a plan for 1971-1976. In accordance with the detailed instructions given to the Director-General of UNESCO by the last legislative conference (resolution 331), the document comprises :

- (a) A statement of the objectives to be pursued during three budget cycles (six years)
- (b) Proposals for activities designed to attain those objectives, on the understanding that for the first biennial budget cycle there will be a statement of guidelines for the programme; that specific projects will appear in the draft programme and budget for the next biennial cycle; and that the proposals for the next two biennial cycles will be submitted in the form of a programme outline describing the main sectors of activity, without suggesting specific projects.
- (c) An estimate of the budgetary implications of these proposals consistent with the planned rate of growth of the Organization.

170. The same resolution of the UNESCO General Conference invites the Director-General, in preparing the plan, to bear in mind inter alia the priority needs of the Member States, the need to achieve close co-ordination with the long-term programmes of the other organizations within the UN system and, in particular, the recommendations on the Second Development Decade that are of specific interest to UNESCO, an appraisal of probable resources and an estimate of the Organization's capacity to carry out the activities proposed.

171. The document produced by UNESCO (16 C/4) represents a commendable effort unique within the UN system. However, the estimated budgetary implications of the future programmes are expressed in terms of percentage rates of growth instead of provisional estimates of the costs of priority programmes, as recommended by the Committee of Fourteen (A/6343, para. 73 (v)).

172. We believe that if a document of the kind described above was placed before the World Health Assembly at regular intervals, this would make it easier for delegations to evaluate the prospective characteristics and cost of the Organization's future programmes, and would also be a useful instrument in the discussion of those programmes.

7) Journal of the Assembly

173. The Journal of the Health Assembly provides information on the timetable of the meetings, the items to be discussed, and the relevant documents. It also gives an account of the main features of the previous day's meetings and furnishes practical information for delegations. It is a comprehensive and well-planned journal.

174. One of the most useful pieces of information for the delegates is the list of documents on each item. In view of the mass of papers before them, delegates should be helped to identify the documents as quickly as possible. Since in WHO many of the background documents on the items to be discussed are included in the Official Records, and these must be constantly consulted, we recommend that, in such cases, also the page on which the material is to be found should be given in the Journal, as is the practice when reference is made to any material from the Handbook of Resolutions and Decisions. Further, we would suggest that as each item is taken up for discussion, the list of documents should be read out twice, more slowly than usual.

175. We noticed on occasion that, when an addendum was issued, it was not mentioned in the Journal; for example, the addendum to document A23/AFL/16 was not mentioned in No. 11, item 3.9.3.

176. It would also be useful to the delegates, when giving in the Journal the results of elections, to list not only the names of the countries elected but also the number of votes received by each.

V. PERIODICITY OF THE BUDGET AND OF THE ASSEMBLY

177. We have deliberately left until the end of our study this question, which was of fundamental concern to the Committee of Fourteen. As members of the Joint Inspection Unit we understand the arguments of the Committee in favour of the adoption of biennial budgets and legislative sessions by the organizations of the United Nations system. We recognize, however, that the question must perforce be studied in the light of the requirements of each specialized agency.

178. Although the adoption of a biennial budget may be linked to the periodicity of the legislative session, the decisions on the two questions do not necessarily have to coincide. This is borne out by the difference in emphasis placed by the Committee of Fourteen on its recommendations regarding these two matters. In referring to the biennial budget, it stated:

"Specialized agencies having an annual budget cycle should adopt a biennial cycle" (A/6343, para. 56 (a)); in referring to biennial legislative meetings, it said: "Those specialized agencies whose legislative bodies now meet on an annual basis should consider the possibility of biennial sessions" (A/6343, para. 104 (b)).

179. ILO, which continues to hold its legislative meeting annually, has adopted for its budget a biennial cycle. WHO has on many occasions considered and discussed the question of holding the World Health Assembly once every two years; it has not, on the other hand, given such frequent and thorough consideration to the question of adopting a biennial budget.

1) Biennial budget

180. At the Twenty-first World Health Assembly, twenty-nine Member States submitted a draft resolution that aimed at (i) introducing a biennial cycle of legislative meetings; (ii) modifying the representative status of members of the Executive Board; and (iii) adopting the system of biennial budgets. The text gives the impression that the question of biennial budgeting was somewhat secondary to, and consequent upon the proposed biennial Assembly. This is borne out by the fact that the preambular part of the draft resolution quoted the recommendation of the Committee of Fourteen relating to legislative meetings, whereas it did not quote that relating to the periodicity of the budget, although the latter, as seen above, was couched in more pressing terms. In the debate on the draft resolution, topics (i) and (ii), being more controversial

and less technical than topic (iii), attracted most of the attention. Finally the draft resolution was withdrawn, and with it, the attempt to introduce in WHO the biennial budgetary cycle.

181. It is interesting to quote, however, the experience of the other comparable agencies on this specific subject as communicated to us by their respective secretariats.

"In the FAO a biennial budget has been in effect since 1958-59. Reporting to the Conference in 1961, the Director-General of the FAO said that he believed 'that the advantages that were hoped for ... have in fact been achieved and that the misgivings regarding its possible abuse have proved groundless' ... and he indicated that it had reduced workload for the Director-General, the programme and financial committees and the Council. He also indicated that the flexibility available to him in managing funds as between the first and second year was useful and that there had been no undue concentration of expenditure in either year of the biennium.....

"In UNESCO, the biennial programme and budget came into effect with the 1953-54 biennium... Experience has shown that the biennial system of .. planning has not given rise to any serious drawbacks and in fact has facilitated forward planning. In the initial stages the technical departments had certain difficulty in being specific on details of the future programme and budget two to three years ahead, but with the emphasis that has been placed on long-term planning, this difficulty has diminished. UNESCO indicates that the biennial system has given a desired degree of flexibility in programme execution."

182. When we asked ILO - where the biennial budgetary cycle was recently introduced - for its opinion on this subject, we received the following reply:

"(a) Internally, the biennial cycle is simplifying the process of planning, programming, budgeting for, administering and reporting on the implementation of ILO activities, since under a biennial system a number of operations included in this process can be either performed less frequently or performed in a less detailed manner on certain occasions. Thus, to take the most striking examples, the preparation of programme proposals at the branch and departmental levels, their analysis, their costing, their consideration by the Programme Committee and their presentation in the form required for submission to the competent deliberative bodies, now take place only once every two years instead of every year; and reports on programme implementation and audited accounts can be presented in a more summary form in one year out of two (i.e. after the close of the first year of the biennium).

This simplification clearly results in savings, which can be used either to introduce improvements in the programme planning and control system or to deal with some of the additional work-load growing out of the general expansion of activities. For example, since no programme and budget proposals had to be prepared for consideration by the ILO Governing Body in February-March 1970, it was possible for the Office to prepare, in the framework of the programme planning and control system, an in-depth review of the Occupational Safety and Health Programme for submission at that session; while in the financial services, the time saved was one factor which, together with reliance on more modern methods such as electronic data processing, made it possible during the period to handle a sharply increased volume of operations without corresponding increases in staff resources. Generally speaking, as programme budgeting is much more complex and costly a process than more traditional methods it would seem that it would be difficult to operate it on a fully satisfactory basis without substantially increased resources in the absence of savings achieved through a biennial system.

- "(b) The savings of time achieved internally have been paralleled to some extent by savings of the time of deliberative organs. Having had no programme and budget proposals to consider at its February-March 1970 Session, the ILO Governing Body and its Financial and Administrative Committee were able to devote the full number of sittings which they considered necessary to the in-depth review mentioned above. Savings of time have, however, been less great at the International Labour Conference.
- "(c) A biennial programme and budget has been found to fit very conveniently into the framework of long-term planning. As you know, in conformity with the practice recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee of Fourteen, the ILO has now introduced a six-year planning period, of which the programme and budget represents the first and most detailed two-year section.
- "(d) As against the above consequences, which are largely favourable, budgeting on a biennial basis clearly involves greater uncertainty in forecasting programme needs and preparing estimates, and a correspondingly greater likelihood that supplementary financial authorization will be required" ("Full-budgeting" should, in the opinion of JIU, help overcome this uncertainty).

183. When the draft resolution on the adoption of biennial cycles was discussed at the Twenty-first Assembly, the Director-General of WHO submitted a very useful background paper (A/21/AFL/8) analyzing in great detail all the procedural, constitutional, financial and administrative issues involved in changing the cycles. But from the point of view of estimated savings, figures were furnished only in the case of the biennial Assembly; as far as savings through the adoption of biennial budgeting were concerned, the only

data given related to economies in documentation. On this score, we believe that the publication of the Official Records volume containing the proposed programme and budget once every two years might represent a saving of the order of \$100,000, even on the assumption that, because it covered a longer period, the new document would have to be 10 per cent (seventy pages) longer. Eventually, too, some way might be found of dispensing with the annual printing of two other documents: the report of the Director-General and the Financial report, which could be issued in a provisional version, in offset, in the years in which the Assembly was not dealing with the programme and budget. At their current cost, an additional \$50,000 could be saved by this means.

184. As far as savings other than on documentation are concerned, may we quote again the opinion of ILO:

"Consideration was given to this question in mid-1968 in the framework of the ILO's internal programme planning and control system, in connexion with the preparation of the Organization's first biennial programme and budget, the programme and budget for 1970-71. It was estimated at that time, on the basis of consultations between the financial services and the programme analysis for all major programmes, that the staff resources which would have been required throughout the Office if programme and budget proposals had to be prepared in 1969 were 361 professional and 166 general service man-weeks, excluding the time of chiefs of department and members of the Directorate. In dollar terms, this represents about \$150,000 at current standard cost levels. Miscellaneous savings for items such as overtime, postage and paper were put at \$3,250.

It is interesting to note that of the total estimated savings on staff time, 108 professional and 41 general service man-weeks were in the Research and Planning Department, which is responsible for the operation of the programme planning and control system, and 40 professional and 45 general service man-weeks in the Finance and General Services Department.

The above estimates of course related only to the preparation of programme and budget proposals. For work relating to their consideration by policy-making organs, which in the ILO occurs in the following year, no detailed estimates are available. However, it seems safe to put the staff requirements at at least 4 professional and 8 general service man-weeks, or about \$2,500 at current standard cost levels, again excluding the time of more senior officials."

185. Should the advantages and economies recorded by UNESCO, ILO and FAO be applicable, broadly speaking, to WHO, its adoption of the biennial budgetary cycle would probably:

- (i) Slacken the pace at which the Director-General and staff of the Secretariat are called upon to work in order to put out a very detailed programme and budget annually and would^{1/} allow them more time for concentrating on other activities;
- (ii) Harmonize budgeting mechanics with the decision taken by the Twenty-second Assembly about biennial programming;
- (iii) Greatly facilitate the formulation, execution and evaluation of medium and long-term plans;
- (iv) Result in manpower savings of at least \$150,000 per biennium;
- (v) Produce savings on documentation of the order of \$150,000 per biennium;
- (vi) Allow the Assembly, in those years where the programme and budget is not discussed, to dedicate more time to scientific matters.

186. The introduction in WHO of the biennial budgetary cycle would seem to involve only Article 55 of the Constitution. Its wording, however, might allow such an innovation to take place without constitutional reform, since the submission of the proposed budget estimates to the Assembly every two years does not preclude the presentation to the Executive Board in the intermediate years, of such estimates in a summary and provisional form.

2) Biennial Assembly

187. The World Health Assembly's decision not to make any change for the time being in the periodicity of its regular sessions was taken relatively recently, in 1968; consequently the comments we shall make here are intended merely to put on record certain views which may be useful in the future.

188. Many Member States had this question in mind long before the Committee of Fourteen recommended that the specialized agencies consider the possibility of biennial legislative sessions. ACABQ encouraged them in that direction as far back as 1948, and in 1949 the representatives of Denmark, Norway and Sweden

^{1/} Since the finalized programme and budget estimates must await the outcome of the annual Regional Committees' sessions, the introduction of the biennial budgetary cycle would be greatly facilitated if they too were to meet only every two years.

made the first move in WHO to promote the introduction of biennial World Health Assemblies. Since the 1950 Third Assembly, four resolutions have been adopted in the Assembly and the Board recommending the adoption of biennial sessions: WHA3.96 EB9.R53, WHA5.22 and EB11.R69. Resolution WHA6.57 of the Sixth Assembly (1953), however, expressed the view "that it is not yet desirable to provide for the establishment of the system of a biennial Health Assembly." In 1958 the Eleventh Assembly and the Board reverted to the question in resolutions WHA11.25 and EB23.R65, but their proposal was again shelved by resolution WHA12.38 of the Twelfth Assembly, which decided that "at this stage in the development of the Organization no change should be made in the periodicity of sessions of the World Health Assembly". Lastly, at the Twenty-first Assembly (1968), a group of twenty-nine Member States, including twenty-one members from the developing nations, submitted a draft resolution which represents the latest initiative in this matter; but after a long discussion the proposal was withdrawn.

189. What considerations weighed with the delegations opposing the draft resolution? Various arguments were advanced in the debate, but the claim most often made by the speakers was that an annual Assembly, apart from maintaining the continuity of man-to-man contact among the delegates, offered senior health officials of the Member States the opportunity for more frequent meetings, which were extremely useful for exchanging information on developments in the different countries. Another view repeatedly expressed was that in the medical field sudden developments occurred in the form both of worsening public health situations and of scientific advances, which must be examined without delay. Other arguments put forward were that the estimated savings to the WHO budget were not big enough to justify such a step; that any such savings would be largely wiped out if WHO was obliged to convene a Special Assembly; that if convening the Assembly every two years meant that its sessions would have to be longer in order to accommodate the increase in the number of agenda items, that too would make inroads in the savings; and that the annual attendance of the delegations at Geneva made it possible to adjust current programmes more often and expand new programmes after discussing them with the Director-General. Lastly, it was argued that the decision would entail amending the Constitution, and since many Member States were slow to ratify such changes, the process would be a long-drawn-out one.

190. The partisans of a biennial Assembly, for their part, relied on several arguments, the most frequently adduced being that a biennial session would facilitate the long-term planning of programmes. It was also argued that the adverse effect of the unduly frequent absence of senior public health administrators from their posts, and the consequent expenditure, would be mitigated; that the Secretariat would be under considerably less pressure in preparing the budget and organizing the Assembly, and would be able to concentrate more effectively on the formulation and execution of programmes; that at least an estimated \$300,000 would be saved, which could be channelled into projects for developing countries; and lastly that the change would be consistent with the position taken by all Member States when they unanimously approved, at the United Nations, the recommendation of the Committee of Fourteen aimed at achieving greater harmonization of procedures within the UN system.

191. There was, however, an indirect factor which perhaps effected negatively the debate. This was the fact that the draft resolution, besides proposing a biennial cycle for the budget and biennial Assembly sessions, advocated a change in the principles governing the election of members of the Executive Board. This very important change, unlike the question of the biennial cycle, had not been discussed at earlier sessions of the Assembly and of the Executive Board, and the somewhat sudden proposal aroused serious misgivings, especially on the part of many developing countries. During the discussion delegates concentrated more on this question than on that of biennial sessions, and thus compounded the confusion that had been created.

192. While it is evident that the introduction of biennial Assemblies would entail some changes in the responsibilities and methods of work of the Executive Board, we do not believe that these would entail a concomitant obligation to change the criteria according to which the Board's members have been elected ever since the creation of the Organization. In any event the matter is of a delicate enough nature to warrant study, followed by an exhaustive discussion independent of any other issue.

193. As we indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the position taken by the Committee of Fourteen in favour of biennial legislative sessions rests

on principles which we regard as sound. After examining the specific case of WHO, and after weighing the arguments advanced for and against the idea during the discussions held both in the Executive Board and the Assembly, we consider that in the long run its adoption would be beneficial to the Organization. Some points, however, need to be borne in mind:

194. (a) The savings to the Organization's budget would be considerably greater than those estimated in 1968. We took as a basis for our calculations the information given in the excellent document (A21/AFL/8) which the Director-General issued for the debate on the possible introduction of a biennial session.

Our calculations rest on the assumption that:

- (i) A biennial World Health Assembly would not have to meet for longer than four weeks. It would be intermediate in duration between the legislative session of FAO (which is about to be shortened to three weeks) and that of UNESCO (32 days):
- (ii) The Executive Board would hold two sessions of two weeks each during the year in which the Assembly did not meet.

On the basis of these assumptions the estimates (at 1969 costs) gave the following results (see document A21/AFL/8, page 4):

Budget of the 1969 Assembly	\$453,000
Reduction in savings <u>1/</u>	\$99,100
Additional expenditure of the Board <u>1/</u>	\$31,400
Total reduction in savings	\$130,500
Possible net saving	<u>\$322,500</u>

In calculating, on the basis of the same assumptions, the possible savings on the 1971 budget, we had to take the following into account:

- (iii) The calculations for 1969 did not include the additional cost of documentation for the Assembly which we have referred to in para. 12. Consequently we must add to the Assembly budget for 1971 (\$541,984) a sum equivalent to such additional cost incurred in 1971 (\$320,394) plus an increment of 10 per cent, which can be regarded as the normal rate of adjustment to 1971 costs, i.e. \$352,433. This would bring the cost of the Assembly in 1971 to a total of approximately \$894,417.

1/ In making these calculations, the sum of \$99,100 had to be deducted from the savings in order to allow for: the continuation of annual publication of the report of the Director-General and of the financial report; a 20 per cent increase in the size of the printed volume on the proposed programme and budget; and additional costs for temporary staff and running costs. A further sum of \$31,400 had to be deducted in order to allow for the increase in the activities of the Executive Board during the year in which the Assembly would not be meeting.

- (iv) In order to adjust the figures for the reduction in savings and additional expenditure of the Board to 1971 values, we have added 20 per cent to the 1969 figures, representing the increase between the two budgets.

The calculation would then give the following results:

Approximate cost of the 1971 Assembly ..	<u>\$894,417</u>
Reduction in savings	\$118,920
Additional expenditure of the Board	<u>\$ 38,680</u>
Total reduction in savings	<u>\$157,600</u>
Possible net saving	<u>\$734,817</u>

This figure for possible savings is by no means negligible: it is roughly comparable for instance, to the sum of \$779,002 which corresponds to thirty-five projects requested by sixteen developing countries ^{1/}, but not included in the Proposed Programme and Budget Estimates for 1971.

We feel, however, that even this figure represents possibly, only a minimum savings. Greater adjustments could be made if it was decided that the biennial Assembly should last three and a half weeks - i.e., three to four days longer than the FAO conference session; if the report of the Director-General, the financial report and the report of the External Auditor were printed in offset in the years in which there was no Assembly; if the printed volume containing the proposed programme and budget was increased in size by no more than 10 per cent, and if the sessions of the Regional Committees were held only in the years in which there was no Assembly. Additional savings of about \$100,000 would be obtained by the last measure alone.

- (b) A biennial Assembly would considerably lighten the burden of the Director-General in the preparation of the programme and budget. The Secretariat is compelled to engage in a race against the clock, and concentration on these tasks takes up valuable time which could be spent on scientific matters.
- (c) Spacing out the Assemblies would give the Secretariat more time to prepare the documentation; the documents could then be distributed with less delays, which at present make it impossible for Member States to study them properly in advance.
- (d) The annual Assembly tends to become a routine meeting at which the accent is placed on administrative, financial and legal matters. Spacing out the Assembly's sessions would give the Executive Board time to examine those matters more thoroughly and to refer them to the Assembly in such a form as to enable it to concentrate on the more essential points. This development has produced good results in UNESCO and FAO.

1/ (Official Records No. 179, p. 606).

- (e) A biennial Assembly fits in better with the timing for the preparation and discussion of future programmes. It would provide a broader perspective in evaluating their implementation, and facilitates the adoption of the system recommended by the Committee of Fourteen and which is becoming the practice in ILO, UNESCO and FAO: that of planning for six years (medium-term) and for longer periods (long-term).
- (f) With biennial Assemblies, the embarrassing moment which seems annually to beset developing countries that have difficulties in paying their annual financial contributions would be less frequent and less obvious, since they would have more time in which to solve the problem. The Secretariat, in its turn, would have more time to issue reminders and urge payments.
- (g) For certain Member States, especially the smaller developing countries, it is a sacrifice to forego every year for a period of time the services of their high officials, who are very few and have many tasks to perform in their public health administrations; particularly since, in addition to the World Health Assembly, they must attend the annual sessions of the Regional Committees so their total annual absence may come to four weeks. Moreover the incidence of travel costs is very high when incurred annually, with the result that the small countries often do not send large enough delegations to Geneva to participate effectively in the proceedings of the Assembly's various organs.
- (h) Experience in FAO and UNESCO shows that delegates do not lose contact with one another because of biennial sessions. Two years go by quickly. Moreover the WHO regional sessions help to maintain contact.
- (i) The fact that, in the medical field important developments may occur which demand urgent consideration is a valid argument, but it is also applicable to UNESCO, where advances in the scientific field occur at an extremely rapid pace; and to FAO, which has to deal with sudden disasters such as an unusually severe drought or famine. In any event, although WHO has never convened a Special Session of the Assembly, that course remains open to it. At current costs, a one-week special session would amount to \$250,000 - an expense which, being incurred only rarely, is of little significance in comparison with the substantial regular savings described above.
- (j) The sessions of the Regional Committees could also take place biennially, in those years where the Assembly was not convened. This would result in substantial savings, as seen in (a) above.

195. To sum up, we are of the opinion that there are good reasons why WHO, at some point, should opt for biennial sessions of the World Health Assembly. In the meantime consideration should perhaps be given to preparing the way,

since the process of amending the Constitution takes some time. The preparations might take the form of introducing into the Constitution an element of flexibility, so that the relevant articles would no longer make yearly sessions mandatory, but would make it permissible to switch to biennial sessions should Member States at a later stage, wish to try out such an experiment.

196. To this effect, it might be appropriate to recall the very pertinent suggestions made by the Director General when, at the request of the Eleventh World Health Assembly, he carried out a study on the matter (Official Records No. 91, Executive Board, Twenty-third Session). The proposals contained in that study would permit the Assembly to decide in the future, once the amendments to the Constitution were accepted and ratified and in the light of the circumstances obtaining at that time, the desirability or otherwise of meeting biennially.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

197. The arrangements for the deliberations of the World Health Assembly have always been a matter of special concern to WHO's governing body. In resolution EB26.R31 the latter stated that the Executive Board and the Director-General should continue to do everything possible to improve its organization and conditions of work. In turn, the last session of the Assembly requested the Board, "to review the revised methods of work of the Health Assembly in the light of the experience gained and to report to the Twenty-fourth World Health Assembly" (Resolution WHA23.1).

198. Our comments and recommendations in this report are intended as a contribution to those efforts and although a critical analysis by "outsiders" to the proceedings of the Assembly entails inevitably certain handicaps, it allows, on the other hand, for a fresh and objective look at the problems.

199. While following the deliberations of the Twenty-third Session we were favourably impressed by its careful planning. Nevertheless, we were able to identify certain areas susceptible of improvement, which we have grouped under two headings: "problems of substance" and "questions of detail".

200. The recommendations dealing with the first group are based on the impression that the World Health Assembly is in danger of becoming a somewhat routine exercise, where subjects of a predominately administrative and budgetary nature increasingly prevail. Such a trend is due mainly, of course, to the dynamic growth of the organization's activities that are, moreover, more and more operational, thus multiplying managerial procedures which, owing to constitutional requirements, must be subject to the Assembly's approval. In addition, the proliferation of organizations within the UN system provokes intricate problems of co-ordination on which decisions must be taken by the respective legislative bodies. Inevitably, all this affects the time that the Health Assembly can devote to the discussion of strictly scientific subjects.

201. At the same time, the Assembly must concentrate, as far as WHO's programme of activities is concerned, on a piecemeal examination of the "Proposed Regular Programme and Budget", which contains proposals for implementation mainly during the year following the session at which it is approved. Although every five years a general programme of work is proposed by the Director-General, the Assembly is not given the possibility of thoroughly debating genuine comprehensive medium and long-term plans - a pressing requirement nowadays in all international organizations.

202. It may be that the fact that WHO is commendably in the lead amongst international organizations as far as decentralization is concerned, has a bearing on these problems, since the delegation of substantial authority to the Regional Committees enables them to discuss in detail and build up in the field their respective work programmes, thus leaving in the hands of the Assembly the strictly legislative responsibilities, i.e. the sanctioning of the final decisions.

203. Be this as it may, our recommendations suggest certain innovations which would allow the Assembly to exercise greater influence in the determination of the overall policies of WHO and to devote more time to scientific and technical matters without affecting the traditional role of the Organization's Regional structure. These suggestions are based on:

- (a) A modification of the purpose of the General Discussion with a view to ensuring that the ideas aired during the debate by Governments through their Ministers of Public Health may be used as the main guidelines in the formulation of the policies of the Organization and of a world strategy in the field of public health;
- (b) The holding of a specific debate on future programmes, so that the Assembly may discuss and approve periodically a medium-term (six-year) and long-term (to be determined) plan, which would include objectives, priorities and budgetary estimates.
- (c) The need to rationalize the discussion of administrative and budgetary questions by such means, among others, as requesting the Executive Board to examine the possibility of presenting some of these questions to the Assembly in such a form as to make it possible for the latter to speed up its own consideration of them.
- (d) A more profitable use of the Technical Discussions and the institution of a periodic debate on the technical and practical aspects of field operations.

204. We feel that were some of these innovations to be introduced, not only would the proceedings become more meaningful, but the work of the Assembly would be less repetitive, since some sessions would discuss future programmes, others field operations, etc.

205. As regards the "questions of detail" that relate largely to the "mechanics" of the Assembly, some suggestions are being made to simplify certain procedures and to reduce the working hours through a better "horizontal" spread of the working time. Our recommendations in the chapter on documentation - to the high quality of which we wish to pay tribute - are designed essentially to reduce the volume of paper reproduced during the session and to allow more time for delegates to study the working documents.

206. As a separate subject, because of its very nature, we have dealt in the last chapter with the question of the periodicity of the budgetary cycle and of the Assembly sessions. We do not feel that it would be opportune to specifically recommend the adoption of biennial legislative sessions, since the subject has been only recently intensely debated in the Assembly and the tendency to maintain the present status quo had prevailed. We have confined ourselves, therefore, to stating our views - which may be useful some day - and to show our preference for a formula that would leave the door open to possible future developments.

207. On the other hand, we recommend that, independently of the question of the periodicity of the Assembly, the World Health Organization consider the introduction of a biennial budgetary cycle - a system already practiced in all other larger specialized agencies. In our judgement, this would bring WHO substantial savings and many other advantages as well.

208. Our suggestions do not entail, in most cases, any amendments of the Constitution, aware as we are that the process of ratification in WHO takes longer than in any other comparable international organization, the United Nations included, to the point that all parties concerned - Member States and Secretariat - seem to share a fatalistic attitude, as if it was taken for granted that no constitutional reforms are possible. Bearing in mind that the Constitution was drafted almost twenty-five year ago, such a conceptual rigidity in an era when the conditions of international co-operation are evolving at such a pace represents, in our view, an anachronism which in itself would seem to warrant being looked into by Member States.

209. To conclude we submit for the consideration of WHO fifteen recommendations with the hope that some of the ideas contained therein may assist the Executive Board and the Secretariat in their current efforts to make the proceedings of the World Health Assembly more efficient and more purposeful.

210. Under the terms of a suggestion contained in Resolution 1554 (XLIX) of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, it is up to the inspectors to advise which recommendations could, in their judgement, be implemented by the Executive Head of WHO.

These might be: 2 (f) and (g); 4 (c) (last sentence); 7 (b) and (c); 8 (b) and (c); 10 (a) and (c); 12 (a) and (b); 13 (a), (e) and (g).

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 In order to keep Member States thoroughly informed about the cost of WHO's deliberative organs and about the volume of the documentation involved, the "Proposed Regular Programme and Budget Estimates" should include:

- (a) An item expressly showing the composition of all expenditure directly attributable to the main deliberative organs (paras. 7-11);
- (b) An annex containing an estimate of the total expenditure directly or indirectly attributable to such activities (paras. 7-11);
- (c) A specific breakdown, as detailed as possible, from which all items of expenditure attributable to documentation for the main deliberative organs could be identified (paras. 12; 141-142);
- (d) Annual statistics on the production of documents connected with the deliberative organs, distinguishing between pre-session, in-session and post-session documentation and including comparative figures for previous years (paras. 162-166).

Recommendation 2 The World Health Assembly might lay more emphasis on the role assigned to it by the Constitution of "determining the policies of the Organization" (paras. 17-24). With this aim in view, the following changes might be introduced in the arrangements for the General Discussion:

- (a) The General Discussion in Plenary Sessions might cease to be devoted solely to examining the reports of the Executive Board and of the Director-General, and become instead a debate on major topics of current interest in the field of public health (paras. 25-33);
- (b) Each year the Executive Board might select not more than three major topics for the General Discussion (paras. 31, 32, 33 (a), (b), (c));
- (c) Apart from the topics specially selected, the examination of the report of the Director-General might be taken as a recurrent annual topic. The Heads of delegations could be invited to refer to any of these topics in their general statements (para. 33 (f));
- (d) The reports of the Executive Board might be relevantly linked to the discussion in the Main Committees of the proposed regular programme and budget, during which the resolution approving them could be adopted (para. 33 (g));

- (e) Without prejudice to the right of the Heads of delegation to raise any matter as they see fit, speakers in the General Discussion could be invited to limit as far as possible accounts of national achievements or to submit these in writing for inclusion in the verbatim records (para. 33 (b) and (e));
- (f) The main topics selected by the Executive Board for the General Discussion and the suggestions concerning the advisable way of referring to national activities should be communicated to the Member States as early as possible and repeated both in the notice convening the Assembly and in the preliminary Journal;
- (g) The method of collecting information about the national activities of Member States in response to Articles 61 to 65 of the Constitution might be improved (para. 33 (e));
- (h) At the close of the General Discussion, the President of the Assembly might make a statement summing up the main points that came up during the debate. He might call upon the Vice-presidents for assistance in preparing his statement. The ideas set forth in this statement would make a fundamental contribution to the determination of the policies of the Organization and, in particular, to the formulation of future programmes (para. 33 (d)).

Recommendation 3 The Assembly should be the primary authority in laying the basic guidelines for the formulation of future programmes. For this purpose:

- (a) WHO might formulate its general programme of work on the basis of specific projections for six years (medium-term) and of forecast outlines for longer periods (long-term) (paras. 34-42);
- (b) At regular intervals the World Health Assembly might include in its agenda an item entitled "Future programmes", for the specific purpose of settling the details of the medium-term and long-term plans (paras. 39-41);
- (c) The background material for the discussion on "Future programmes" might include:

- (i) The successive statements made by Presidents of the Health Assembly when summing up the ideas expressed in the General Discussions;
 - (ii) the reports of the Executive Board containing suggestions received from the regional system;
 - (iii) a document by the Director-General containing an outline of the future programmes (paras. 39; 169-172);
- (d) At the close of the discussion on "Future programmes", the Assembly might adopt a resolution featuring basic guidelines for six years ahead and forecasting tentative projections for a longer period (paras. 40-41).

Recommendation 4 Member States might derive greater benefit from the discussions on technical topics, and these might become more purposeful if:

- (a) The "Technical Discussions" could be made an integral part of the Assembly (paras. 43-46);
- (b) Their results were adequately reproduced and given wider dissemination (para. 45);
- (c) Arrangements could be made for the Technical Discussions to be held at the level of the technicians attached to the delegations, who themselves might be specially chosen by each Ministry of Health according to the planned topic for discussion. This might be indicated in the convening notice, the preliminary Journal and the Guidebook for Delegates (para. 46).

Recommendation 5 The technical and practical aspects of field operations should be dealt with in the Assembly (paras. 47-50). For this purpose:

- (a) Periodically, with preference at sessions where future programmes are not discussed, an item entitled "Field operations" might be placed on the agenda to provide the opportunity for a technical review of, for instance: the practical aspects of the execution of field programmes financed out of WHO's own funds and extra-budgetary resources; co-ordination with other sources of finance and aid, bilateral as well as multilateral; the evaluation and internal and

external inspection of projects; the supply of equipment; recruitment problems etc. (paras. 48-50);

- (b) The discussion might be held in Committee A of the Assembly on the basis of documents prepared by the Secretariat in the light of a detailed discussion of such matters which might be held at the Regional sessions;
- (c) Both at the Regional sessions and in the Assembly debates on field operations it would be appropriate to examine in detail, as recurrent items, the relevant reports prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit (para. 50).

Recommendation 6 In order to relieve the Assembly of the detailed examination of administrative, financial, constitutional and legal matters, and thus to allow more time for the examination of questions in WHO's special field of competence:

- (a) The Executive Board might study what items it might deal with in depth and transmit these to the Assembly in such a form as to enable the latter to speed up their examination (paras. 51-55);
- (b) The Secretariat could carry out a study designed to consolidate the examination of certain items and cover them in a smaller number of draft resolutions (paras. 126-129).

Recommendation 7 Consideration could be given to the following suggestions concerning Assembly arrangements. In particular:

- (a) The World Health Assembly might decide to meet normally at Headquarters; only were the Assembly to convene elsewhere, would a specific resolution be necessary (paras. 56-59);
- (b) When the agenda of the Assembly is sent to Member States, a chart should be enclosed showing the proposed detailed day-by-day programme of Plenary and Committees' meetings, including the closing date of the Session (paras. 60-63);
- (c) The proposed programme of meetings should not anticipate night sessions (paras. 119-122);
- (d) The Sessions devoted to the General Discussion should take place at the beginning of the Assembly and should proceed without interruption (para. 25);
- (e) The sessions of the Assembly should continue to not exceed eighteen consecutive days (paras. 64-68);

- (f) The total number of items placed on the agenda could be reduced, mainly by rationalizing the examination of administrative and financial matters (paras. 69-70; 51-55; 126-129);
- (g) Thought should be given to arranging for at least two full-membership meetings simultaneously; the holding of Plenary sessions should not preclude the holding of one Main Committee meeting at the same time (paras. 80-86; 113; 122);
- (h) The Technical Discussions should not be held at the same time as meetings of the Main Committees, but they could coincide if necessary with Plenary meetings (para. 87).

Recommendation 8 In order that each delegation may derive the maximum benefit from its attendance at the Assembly:

- (a) Each Member State should endeavour to appoint at least three members to its delegation, including titular delegates, alternates and advisers (paras. 71-79);
- (b) The meaning of Article 11 of the Constitution should be clearly explained to Member States, so that the expression "not more than three delegates" may not be interpreted in a restrictive sense (paras. 77-78);
- (c) To the extent that Member States are not able to fully staff their delegations to the Assembly, they might consider making use of other resources available in the Permanent Missions in Geneva (para. 76);
- (d) Recommendations and suggestions under (a) and (b) above, should be made known to Member States in an advance notice not later than three months before the opening of the Assembly Session and should be repeated in the letter convening it (paras. 78-79).

Recommendation 9 In order to ensure, on the one hand, that the Assembly begins its business without delay and, on the other, that it is not interrupted later because of certain traditional ceremonies (paras. 88-100):

- (a) The new President of the Assembly might make his statement at the afternoon meeting on the opening day (paras. 96-97);
- (b) The ceremonies connected with the award of Foundation Prizes could be made shorter and could take place at the opening morning meeting (paras. 98-99);

- (c) The Assembly should start its business in the morning of the day following the opening day (para. 97).

Recommendation 10 Arrangements in the Plenary conference hall, and others concerning voting procedures, might be improved as follows:

- (a) The arrangement under which the Vice-Presidents occupy a platform below the rostrum in the Plenary conference hall might be discontinued for all meetings other than the opening session (para. 100);
- (b) A study should be made with a view to introducing an up-to-date expeditious vote-counting system (paras. 101-103);
- (c) The election results should be given in the Journal wherever possible in greater detail (para. 176).

Recommendation 11 In order to make the meetings of the Main Committees as efficient as possible and to simplify the procedure for recording and processing their decisions:

- (a) Candidates nominated for Office in the Main Committees who are unable to stay until the end of the session, should make this known to their sponsors (para. 107);
- (b) The work of the Main Committees should not be interrupted while elections are held in Plenary (para. 103);
- (c) A working rule could be suggested by the Chairmen of the Main Committees that speakers limit their statements to six minutes (equivalent to 800 words). Were this recommendation accepted, the detailed arrangements might be published in the preliminary Journal and in the Guidebook for Delegates (paras. 114-118);
- (d) Draft resolutions should be worded in the most straightforward possible form, keeping the number and length of preambular paragraphs to a minimum (para. 128);
- (e) The number of resolutions on administrative and routine questions could be reduced (paras. 125-129);
- (f) Resolutions approved in the Main Committees should not be transmitted to Plenary in batches for piecemeal consideration and adoption by it. Each Committee, on completing its deliberations, might transmit in a single document all the resolutions it has approved, and Plenary would take them up at a meeting specifically devoted to examining the results of each Main Committee's work (paras. 131-136).

Recommendation 12 In order that the Member States may be thoroughly conversant with the documentation for the Assembly, the following steps could be taken:

- (a) A complete list of all the documents issued and to be issued in relation to each item should be circulated at the same time as the agenda. Further documents might then figure in an addendum (paras. 144-145);
- (b) The utmost effort should be made to ensure that all such documents are circulated in all appropriate languages not later than the time-limit of sixty days fixed by rule 14 (paras. 146-153);
- (c) Should this be found impracticable, rule 14 might be amended to reduce the time-limit to six weeks; in addition, the phrase in the rule which could allow for an unduly liberal interpretation of the time-limit could be re-worded to authorize delay only in exceptional circumstances. (para. 153).

Recommendation 13 With a view to ensuring the quickest possible identification of documents during the Assembly and in order to reduce the number of working papers distributed among delegates:

- (a) Documents might be reproduced on paper of a different colour for each language (para. 161);
- (b) In connexion with recommendation 11 (f), the issue of Reports, containing groups of resolutions first in draft and then in final form might be discontinued in favour of a single final "Report", containing all resolutions of each Main Committee (paras. 167 (f)-168);
- (c) The reproduction of resolutions individually in final form could whenever possible be discontinued (paras. 167 (e)-168);
- (d) Committees of limited membership might consolidate their decisions, whenever possible, in a single report to each session (para. 167 (f));
- (e) The Journal, while referring to material in the Official Records relating to a given agenda item, might give the page on which the information is to be found (para. 174);
- (f) The list of documents related to the item to be discussed should be read out twice at the beginning of each meeting (para. 174);

- (g) The Journal, in its daily list of documents should not omit any addendum and corrigendum (para. 175).

Recommendation 14 With a view to ensuring a greater harmonization of the budget with the medium and long-term plans and considering the heavy burden the preparation of annual budgetary estimates imposes on the Secretariat, it is suggested that:

- (a) WHO re-examine the possibility of adopting a biennial budget cycle (paras. 177-186);
- (b) A study be made to see whether such a procedure could be adopted without constitutional reform (para. 186).

Recommendation 15 Thought could be given to a procedure which, without affecting the existing constitutional requirement for annual sessions of the World Health Assembly, would make it permissible in the future for the Organization to convene the Assembly biennially if and whenever it sees fit to do so. (paras. 187-196).