

No. 834

**UNITED NATIONS
(OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR)
and
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

Memorandum of understanding on the harmonization of the activities of the World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator for the relief co-ordination of, preparedness for, and prevention of disasters. Signed at Geneva on 9 March 1979

Authentic text: English.

Filed and recorded by the Secretariat on 9 March 1979.

**ORGANISATION DES NATIONS UNIES
(BUREAU DU COORDONNATEUR
DES NATIONS UNIES
POUR LES SECOURS EN CAS DE CATASTROPHE)
et
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTÉ**

Mémorandum d'accord sur l'harmonisation des activités de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé et celles du Bureau du Coordonnateur des Nations Unies pour les secours en cas de catastrophe en matière de coordination des secours, de capacité opérationnelle et de prévention dans l'éventualité de catastrophes. Signé à Genève le 9 mars 1979

Texte authentique : anglais.

Classé et inscrit au répertoire par le Secrétariat le 9 mars 1979.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING¹ BETWEEN THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR

WHEREAS the World Health Organization (hereinafter referred to as WHO) by articles 2 and 28 of its Constitution² is empowered to furnish, within the limits of its resources, appropriate technical co-operation and necessary aid in cases of epidemics and emergencies, and assist in measures of prevention and mitigation of hazards in disasters; and

WHEREAS the General Assembly of the United Nations, by resolution 2816 (XXVI),³ endorsed the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of an adequate permanent office in the United Nations (hereinafter referred to as UNDRO) to be the focal point in the UN system for disaster relief matters, and which would be headed by a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator; and

WHEREAS by paragraph 3 of article IV of the Agreement between the United Nations and WHO, WHO affirmed its intention of co-operating in measures necessary to make co-ordination of the activities of the specialized agencies and those of the United Nations fully effective; and

WHEREAS since 1948 WHO has been rendering assistance to victims of disasters and epidemics, and since the establishment of UNDRO in 1972, WHO and UNDRO have been collaborating closely and effectively in matters of common concern;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Director-General of WHO and the UN Disaster Relief Co-ordinator have agreed to the following arrangements:

1. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNDRO AND WHO

(i) It is the responsibility of UNDRO to co-ordinate disaster emergency assistance, as well as to promote disaster preparedness and disaster prevention; UNDRO's role within the terms of the General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) is that of an over-all co-ordinator of all disaster-related assistance.

(ii) WHO is the focal point for all health problems and will continue to exercise its operational prerogatives and responsibilities for all emergency and preventive health assistance.

(iii) UNDRO will continue to co-ordinate WHO's assistance with other emergency assistance which may be given by other donor agencies or organizations. UNDRO is also responsible for providing information to the international community on the emergency situation as a whole, and its responsibilities remain whether the disaster be sudden, such as an earthquake or slow in developing, such as a drought.

¹ Came into force on 9 March 1979 by signature, in accordance with section 9.

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 14, p. 185; vol. 377, p. 380; vol. 990, p. 360, and vol. 1035, p. 315.

³ *Ibid.*, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 29 (A/8429)*, p. 85.

2. DISASTER-RELATED ACTIVITIES IN RESPECT OF WHICH WHO AND UNDRO WILL CO-OPERATE

(i) UNDRO works in three main fields of activities, namely disaster relief co-ordination, pre-disaster planning, and prevention of disasters.

(ii) WHO works in these aspects of any disasters that may be due to natural or man-made causes or epidemics.

(iii) In the field of disaster prevention and preparedness, WHO and UNDRO will co-operate in activities in their respective spheres, including the dissemination of information on scientific and technological developments.

(iv) UNDRO's activities in the mobilization, direction and co-ordination of relief assistance will continue until relief operations are phased out and the stricken State moves into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction. WHO's work includes rehabilitation and restoration to normal of the health services.

(v) WHO will inform UNDRO of its activities in this area, taking into account General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) paragraph 1 (i).

3. REQUESTS FOR DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

(i) The Government of a disaster-stricken State makes a request to UNDRO for disaster relief when it needs international assistance. Such a request will be regarded as having been addressed to the United Nations system in general. When any request for disaster relief assistance is made to UNDRO, the latter will promptly inform WHO, which will consider the medical or health assistance required. UNDRO and WHO will then consult each other on the action to be taken.

(ii) When in case of an epidemic a Government requests health assistance from WHO, normal WHO procedures will then operate. WHO will keep UNDRO informed of such requests and of the action taken or proposed.

(iii) When disaster relief assistance is being considered or provided by WHO, UNDRO will inform WHO of any contributions made to it, or known to have been made bilaterally to the disaster-stricken State by donors, which are liable to satisfy or modify the request for health assistance made by the disaster-stricken State.

4. JOINT ACTION IN THE FIELD

(i) WHO is represented in most countries by a WHO programme co-ordinator. UNDRO is represented by the UNDP resident representative. There will be co-operation between the representatives of WHO and UNDRO.

(ii) UNDRO has arranged for the establishment in developing countries of standing United Nations disaster teams. These teams operate under the responsibility of the UNDP resident representative. Representatives of other UN agencies, as well as other interested parties present in these countries, including diplomatic missions, take part in the work of the teams. WHO field officers will collaborate with the UN disaster teams. The WHO member will be responsible for the assessment of the health and medical requirements in any emergency situation.

(iii) UNDRO normally sends a representative or representatives from its headquarters to disaster areas for on-the-spot assessments and to advise the

Government of the disaster-stricken State. For all health problems and whenever practicable, representatives from WHO headquarters or already in the field will join these missions at short notice. UNDRO may, if necessary, meet the costs of travel and subsistence allowance of a WHO headquarters officer, as well as those of its own. The need for such joint missions will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

WHO and UNDRO recognize that the rapid exchange of information on matters of mutual interest is of paramount importance. To this end, WHO and UNDRO will keep each other fully informed of any action they are taking and will, in particular, send each other copies of relevant cables and other communications.

6. FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

(i) As has been the practice, when donated funds are transferred from one agency to the other for the implementation of some action related to a disaster emergency, reciprocally no "overhead cost levy" or other fee will be charged. Interest on funds held by either party pending actual disbursement will be credited to the trust fund set up for the particular operation for which the funds are destined in accordance with the financial regulations, rules or practices of the party concerned. Final accounting of such transactions will be rendered in due course. Any unspent balance will be returned to the donating agency. Narrative reports of action taken and results achieved by WHO or UNDRO in using funds originally contributed to the other party will, whenever practicable, be furnished so that they may be communicated to donors.

(ii) In every emergency operation receiving financial support from UNDRO, all information relevant to procurement, despatch, receipt, and final disposition of those relief supplies procured by WHO will be made available to UNDRO as soon as practicable for the purpose of informing donors and satisfying UNDRO's internal audit requirements.

7. AIRFREIGHT OF RELIEF SUPPLIES

WHO has gained a certain expertise in procuring and shipping medical supplies at special rates. UNDRO will, if necessary, reinforce this by seeking from air carriers on behalf of WHO free airfreight or concessional terms for emergency relief supplies. This service will extend to disaster relief situations in which UNDRO has not itself received a request from the stricken State. UNDRO and WHO will co-operate in matters of emergency supplies.

8. REVIEW OF COLLABORATION

The Director-General of WHO and the UN Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, or their representatives, will meet from time to time in order to review and evaluate their collaboration in disaster-related matters, and to consider any improvements therein which may be suggested from experience.

9. ENTRY INTO FORCE, AMENDMENT AND DURATION

This Memorandum of Understanding will enter into force upon its signature by the Director-General of WHO and the UN Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, and

may be amended by mutual agreement. It will remain in force until such time as it is terminated by mutual agreement or by one agency giving the other three months' written notice of termination.

[Signed — Signé]¹

Under-Secretary-General
Disaster Relief Co-ordinator

[Signed — Signé]²

Director-General
World Health Organization

Geneva, 9 March 1979

¹ Signed by Faruk N. Berkol — Signé par Faruk N. Berkol.

² Signed by Halfdan Mahler — Signé par Halfdan Mahler.