

No. 983

**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 Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and the World Health Organization for the relief co-ordination of, preparedness for and prevention of disasters. Signed at Geneva on 23 December 1987

Authentic text: English.

Filed and recorded by the Secretariat of the United Nations on 23 December 1987.

**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 du Bureau du Coordonnateur des Nations Unies pour les secours en cas de catastrophe et celles de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé en matière de coordination des secours, de capacité opérationnelle et de prévention dans l'éventualité de catastrophes. Signé à Genève le 23 décembre 1987

Texte authentique : anglais.

Classé et inscrit au répertoire par le Secrétariat de l'Organisation des Nations Unies le 23 décembre 1987.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING¹ BETWEEN THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR

WHEREAS, the mandate of the World Health Organization (hereinafter referred to as WHO) stems from its Constitution, which states that one of the functions of the Organization shall be to furnish appropriate technical assistance and, in emergencies, necessary aid upon the request or acceptance of Governments (Article 2.d); the Constitution authorizes the Executive Board to take emergency measures within the functions and financial resources of the Organization to deal with events requiring immediate action and to undertake studies and research on emergency problems (Article 28.i); furthermore, the Constitution² establishes a special fund to meet emergencies and unforeseen contingencies (Article 58); and

WHEREAS, the World Health Assembly resolutions emphasize the need to strengthen the Organization's capacity to promote approaches for prevention of adverse health effects and for preparedness of the Member States as well as for coordination of aid (WHA34.26);³ and the necessity of an integrated response linking emergency measures with long-term development, and the need to intensify WHO's technical cooperation at the country level to enable the Member States to enhance their emergency preparedness (WHA38.29);⁴ and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly of the United Nations, by Resolution 2816 (XXVI),⁵ endorsed the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of an adequate permanent office in the United Nations to be the focal point in the United Nations system for disaster relief matters (hereinafter referred to as UNDR0), 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,⁶ WHO affirmed its intention of cooperating in measures necessary to make coordination 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 disaster and epidemics, and since the establishment of UNDR0 in 1972, WHO and UNDR0 have been collaborating closely and effectively in matters of common concern; and

WHEREAS, in the spirit of close collaboration, the Director-General of WHO and the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordination signed a Memorandum of Understanding in March 1979,⁷ which may be amended by mutual agreement.

NOW THEREFORE, based on a review of the developments in the field of emergency preparedness and response and aiming to improve the collaboration from experience gained, the contracting parties have agreed to the following arrangements:

¹ Came into force on 23 December 1987 by signature, in accordance with section 8.

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 14, p. 185.

³ World Health Organization, *Handbook of resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board*, vol. II (1973-1984), p. 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. III, 2nd edition (1985-1989), p. 16.

⁵ United Nations, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 29 (A/8429)*, p. 85.

⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 19, p. 193.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1129, p. 277.

1. *General responsibilities of UNDRO and WHO*

a. UNDRO's role within the terms of the General Assembly resolutions 2816 (XXVI), 36/225,¹ 37/144² and 41/201³ is that of an overall coordinator of all disaster related assistance.

b. UNDRO's responsibility is to mobilize, coordinate and direct disaster emergency assistance, as well as to promote disaster preparedness and disaster prevention.

c. UNDRO is 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.

d. UNDRO will continue to request WHO Headquarters and Regional Offices for technical advice for health aspects of emergency preparedness and relief (given by other donor agencies or organizations).

e. WHO acts as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work. This direction and coordination is provided by its Headquarters and six Regional Offices as appropriate in a coordinated manner.

f. WHO, through its Headquarters, Regional Offices and Representatives, will furnish technical cooperation and emergency response as an integral part of the global strategy for health for all and promote health emergency preparedness in its Member States.

2. *Activities in which WHO and UNDRO will cooperate*

2.1 *Emergency preparedness*

a. Support countries in the formulation of their national emergency preparedness and response programmes (EPR) and in their implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation.

b. Promote emergency-related communication and exchange of information between WHO and UNDRO and with other organizations.

c. Support studies on the epidemiology of emergencies, on early warning systems and on methods for situation assessment and evaluation.

d. Organize and participate in training courses, workshops and meetings, including the preparation and distribution of training guidelines, manuals and other training materials.

e. Any other relevant activity which is mutually agreed.

2.2 *Emergency response*

a. WHO and UNDRO will establish joint action in the field through their Headquarters and Regional Offices as appropriate, and through their country Representatives.

b. WHO is represented in most developing countries by a WHO Representative (WR). UNDRO is represented by the UNDP Resident Representative (UNDP/RR). There will be cooperation between the Representatives of WHO and UNDRO.

¹ United Nations, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 51 (A/36/51)*, p. 153.

² *Ibid.*, *Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 51 (A/37/51)*, p. 117.

³ *Ibid.*, *Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 53 (A/41/53)*, p. 152.

c. UNDR0 arranges for the establishment of standing United Nations Disaster Teams in developing countries which operate under the responsibility of the UNDP Resident Representative/UN Resident Coordinator (UNDP/PROG/FIELD/110/REV.1). Representatives of other United Nations agencies, as well as interested parties in these countries, including diplomatic missions, take part in the work of the teams. WHO, through its country Representatives, Regional Offices and Headquarters, participates in the United Nations disaster teams and is responsible for the assessment of health requirements.

d. UNDR0 may send a Representative or Representatives from its Headquarters to disaster areas for on-the-spot assessment and to advise the Government of the disaster-stricken State. For all health problems and whenever practicable, Representatives from WHO Headquarters, Regional Offices, or experts already in the field will join these missions at short notice. As the need arises, UNDR0 and WHO will consult on the financing of travel and subsistence allowance for the participation of WHO staff not assigned to the stricken country. The need for such joint missions will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

e. UNDR0's activities in the mobilization, direction and coordination of relief assistance will continue until relief operations are phased out and the stricken State moves into the state of rehabilitation and reconstruction. WHO's technical cooperation includes rehabilitation and reconstruction of health services infrastructure, within the framework of the Organization's general health development policies.

f. WHO will inform UNDR0 of its activities in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) paragraphs 1 (i).

3. *Requests for disaster relief assistance*

a. When it needs international assistance, the Government of a disaster-stricken State makes a request to UNDR0 for disaster relief. 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 or through UNDR0, the latter will promptly inform WHO, which, through Headquarters, Regional Offices and WHO Representatives, will be responsible for the assessment and for recommendations on the action to be taken by the United Nations system and the international community in the area of health assistance. UNDR0 and WHO will then consult each other on the implementation.

b. When in case of an emergency a Government requests health assistance directly from WHO, WHO will keep UNDR0 informed of such requests and of the action taken or proposed.

c. WHO will provide technical advice to Governments or agencies willing to provide relief assistance in the health sector, and will keep UNDR0 informed.

d. UNDR0 and WHO will share information on contributions made through then or known to have been made bilaterally to the disaster-stricken State by donors, so that such contributions can be taken into account when considering relief assistance, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

e. UNDR0 and WHO will collaborate in the development and implementation of concerted relief programmes as envisaged by General Assembly resolution 36/225, including issuance of joint appeals as appropriate.

4. *Communications*

WHO and UNDR0 recognize that the rapid exchange of information on matters of mutual interest is of paramount importance. To this end WHO and UNDR0

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. UNDRO will send situation reports to both WHO Headquarters and to the WHO Regional Offices as appropriate.

5. *Financial arrangements*

a. Funds transferred from one agency to the other for the implementation of some action related to a disaster, will be credited to the Trust Fund set up for the particular operation for which the funds are destined, and will be handled 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.

b. 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.

6. *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, also, for emergency relief situations in which UNDRO has not itself received a request from the stricken State. UNDRO and WHO will cooperate in matters of emergency supplies.

7. *Review of collaboration*

The Director-General of the World Health Organization and the United Nations 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.

8. *Entry into force, amendment and duration*

This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force upon its signature by the Director-General of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and shall supersede the previous Memorandum of Understanding, signed in March 1979. It may be amended by mutual agreement. It will remain in force until such time as it is terminated by mutual agreement or by one contracting party giving the other three months' written notice of termination.

[Signed — Signé]¹

Director-General
World Health Organization

Date: 23 December 1987

[Signed — Signé]²

Under-Secretary-General
United Nations Disaster Relief
Co-ordinator

Date: 23 December 1987

¹ Signed by Dr. Malher — Signé par Dr. Malher.

² Signed by M'Hamed Essaafi — Signé par M'Hamed Essaafi.