



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH & CONSUMER PROTECTION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Directorate G - Public Health

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
OFFICE AT THE EUROPEAN UNION

ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE
BUREAU AUPRES DE L'UNION EUROPEENNE



Luxembourg, 19th July 2002
SANCO/G1 D(2002) 710252

Note for the record

Second High Level Meeting

between the European Commission and the World Health Organisation

6 June 2002, Brussels

The second **High Level Meeting between Commissioner Byrne and Director General Brundtland** in the context of the Exchange of Letters took place in Brussels on 6 June. This was followed by further meetings between Dr Brundtland and **Commissioners Lamy, Busquin, Nielson** and the **Head of Commissioner Wallström's Cabinet**, in the presence of Commissioner Byrne. The meetings were also attended by Dr Danzon, Regional Director of WHO European Office and senior officials from both organisations.

The meeting took place in a very cordial atmosphere and was extremely positive and constructive. It clearly demonstrated that a coherent approach to co-operation between the two organisations was being taken and that this would and should be further developed. The conclusions of the meeting are attached.

After the meeting Commissioner Byrne and Dr Brundtland participated in a press conference which focused on tobacco control initiatives (press release is attached). This was followed by a working lunch with the participation of Commissioners Byrne and Nielson, Dr Brundtland, and some senior officials. The state of play with regard to health security and issues relating to health and health care and enlargement were discussed.

MEETING BETWEEN COMMISSIONER BYRNE AND DR BRUNDTLAND

Commissioner Byrne and Dr Brundtland **reviewed co-operation** over the past two years, including the results of the Senior Official's meeting which took place on 24 October 2001 in Brussels¹. Both sides agreed that the new framework of co-operation was proving very successful and was helpful in developing a productive partnership at the policy level. Dr

¹ Minutes of the first meeting of Senior Officials in the framework of the Exchange of Letters between the European Commission and WHO, Brussels, 24 October 2001.

Brundtland stressed that the European Union (EU) is an important strategic partner for WHO and highlighted its role on the global level and in the enlarged Europe.

Commissioner Byrne mentioned that the new **Community public health programme** will start in January 2003 providing new opportunities to develop further the policy agenda, and that WHO is a major partner in this process. He added that health is a priority for the EU enlargement and efforts are being made to help candidate countries meet the accession challenges.

In the area of **communicable diseases** Commissioner Byrne and Dr Brundtland agreed that work on surveillance is well on track and discussed possibilities to strengthen surveillance structures and capacity building in candidate countries. They discussed the revision of the International Health Regulations. Commissioner Byrne stressed that the Commission's full involvement in this process will facilitate the negotiations with the EU Member States. Dr Brundtland agreed that from WHO's perspective, the Commission's timely involvement in the revision process would be very valuable. They also discussed the issue of exchanging officials in the area of communicable diseases. It was agreed that a WHO official should be seconded to the Commission for a period of up to one year and WHO should provide the Commission with the profile of the person to be seconded as soon as possible. This would be followed by a secondment from the Commission to WHO. The costs of each person seconded should be met by their parent organisation.

Tobacco was a key issue of the discussions and the main topic of the press conference that followed. Commissioner Byrne gave an overview of EU tobacco legislation and the various initiatives underway, including the recommendation on smoking prevention, and the new anti-smoking information campaign which had recently been launched. Dr Brundtland expressed her support for the work and in particular welcomed the first phase of the Commission's anti-smoking campaign. She also underlined the importance of the WHO Convention as the first globally binding legal instrument in the health area. Both parties agreed to continue working closely with the aim of ensuring an agreement on a strong Convention by May 2003.

The Commission and WHO also discussed possibilities of co-operating to put tobacco control in developing countries on the international development agenda. They agreed on the organisation of a high-level round table on tobacco and development which should take place before the negotiating round for the Convention in spring 2003.

On the issues of **food safety and nutrition**, Commissioner Byrne referred to the progress in establishing the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). Dr Brundtland described the WHO strategy on diet, nutrition and prevention of chronic diseases mentioning that the process was continuing and a new document would be produced. She stressed on the need to work closely together in the development of the strategy. The Commissioner responded that the Commission would be pleased to be involved in this process in the future.

Dr Brundtland and Commissioner Byrne also discussed issues related to joint work in the area of **health information**. They agreed that WHO and the Commission should continue to co-operate in developing new health information systems focusing on ensuring comparability of data and generation of information that can be used for health evidence.

Dr Brundtland and Commissioner Byrne agreed that a good way to strengthen co-operation would be to work together to draw up a **joint action plan on public health issues** to cover the period till the end of 2004. The following areas for future work were identified: strengthening the existing partnership in communicable diseases, tobacco and health information, and developing work in new areas, such as health and enlargement, poverty and health and children's health and environment. The next meeting of senior officials in October will flesh out the details.

MEETING BETWEEN COMMISSIONER LAMY AND DR BRUNDTLAND

Dr Brundtland and Commissioner Lamy discussed issues related to access to medicines for developing countries. Both sides shared the same overall approach to the issue of global access to affordable medicines and agreed to strengthen their co-operation in this area, particularly in relation to tiered pricing.

Dr Brundtland and Mr Lamy underlined that the Declaration on the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement in Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and Public Health made at the launch of the Doha Development Agenda underscored a pro-public health approach in international trade. In its role as technical adviser on health issues and access to medical technologies, WHO looked forward to close co-operation with the EU.

Dr Brundtland commended the spirit in which the EU was conducting negotiations at the WTO on compulsory licences for developing countries with limited or no manufacturing capacity. Both sides agreed that WTO members need to find a suitable, balanced and workable solution for these countries before the end of this year.

Commissioner Lamy and Dr Brundtland agreed that WHO should also co-operate closely, where appropriate, with WTO and the World Intellectual Property Organisation, on technical assistance to developing countries implementing the TRIPS Agreement along the lines of the Doha Declaration.

They also agreed that health care providers and consumers in the poorest countries need the lowest possible prices to make essential medicines affordable to all. They called for continued efforts by the international community, research-based companies, and generic pharmaceutical producers to achieve this on a sustainable basis. The EU and WHO will continue to analyse the efforts of abolishing tariffs and taxes on medicines imported into developing countries.

MEETING BETWEEN COMMISSIONER BUSQUIN AND DR BRUNDTLAND

Commissioner Busquin and Dr Brundtland discussed the possibility of a WHO participation in health related research aspects within the forthcoming EU 6th Research Framework Programme, notably via its priority themes on genomics and biotechnology, policy support and international co-operation.

Dr Brundtland agreed that WHO will contribute to raising the awareness of developing countries on the opportunities for co-operation in the Europe-Developing Countries Clinical

Trials Partnership programme (EDCTP) to which the EU will contribute € 200 million. The Commissioner underlined that this project is going to be the largest ever funded in the framework of EU research policy. He welcomed WHO's offer to provide technical advice and support in establishing EDCTP and invited WHO to join EDCPT as a full partner.

Dr Brundtland and Commissioner Busquin agreed to launch more systematic co-operation, starting with a regular exchange of information on their missions, priorities and actions specifically on research and ethics in the context of health research in developing countries

MEETING BETWEEN COMMISSIONER NIELSON AND DR BRUNDTLAND

Dr Brundtland and Commissioner Nielson discussed the development of a broader strategic partnership, as part of the work on reinforcing the EC/UN relationship. The Commission mentioned an interest in a partnership with WHO to join forces to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in health, such as reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and at least halting the spread of AIDS, Malaria and TB by 2015.

The Commissioner highlighted the differences between the EC's financial mechanisms for providing assistance and those of individual donor countries. With regard to EC assistance there was always a need in particular to have the prior agreement of the beneficiary countries. Dr Brundtland stressed the need to have a thorough understanding of the relevant mechanisms.

Both partners were concerned about the lack of clarity in the preparations for the Johannesburg Summit. Further work should be done in partnership during the summer.

Commissioner Nielson and Dr Brundtland discussed how additional funds promised under Monterrey will be allocated while respecting the principle of national ownership of EC outcomes. Commissioner Nielson pointed out that this was a matter to be decided by the Member States. However it was possible that more resources could be channelled via multilateral organisations. The Commissioner stressed the important role of the Development Council while new players are coming on board.

The Commissioner stressed that the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health set up by WHO had produced an important report stressing that real change can be achieved. However he considered that the report focused too much on resources and overestimated countries' capacities.

The Commission and WHO agreed to work closely together to put Tobacco Control in developing countries on the international development agenda, including during the high level round table (mentioned above).

The two sides noted the positive developments of the co-operation on pharmaceutical policy in the follow-up of the programme on communicable diseases and the preparations for a joint programme on essential medicines in ACP countries.

MEETING BETWEEN MR ANNERBERG HEAD OF COMMISSIONER WALLSTRÖM'S CABINET AND DR BRUNDTLAND

The Commission and WHO discussed the progress made both in the environment and health field, and on the preparation of the World Summit on Sustainable development Johannesburg 2002. Both sides agreed on the need to reinforce global cooperation and coordination on Children's environment and health, in particular in the preparation of Johannesburg, this theme being integral part of sustainable development. They consequently identified it as a key area for cooperation. The implementation of the new strategy will offer additional room for further specific areas of cooperation. The two parties will examine jointly how best to take cooperation forward, including targets and reporting mechanisms. WHO welcomed the invitation for a joint Brundtland-Wallström-Byrne article on Children's environment and health.

EC reiterated its commitment to cooperate in the preparation of the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be held in Budapest in 2004. The Commission fully supported "The Future for our Children" as the overarching theme for the Conference and welcomed the process of identification of priority areas recently initiated. WHO invited the Commission to co-organise the conference.

Both sides recalled their commitments in the preparation of the WSSD in Johannesburg and emphasised the importance of having health at the heart of sustainable development and the need for a strong outcome on health, energy, water and governance. They agreed to work together to streamline, consolidate and bring coherence to the many environment and health initiatives underway. A bilateral meeting between Dr Brundtland and Commissioner Wallström will be planned after Johannesburg to discuss results and follow-up.

Finally, Dr Brundtland announced that WHO will launch an initiative on environment and health and Dr Nabarro gave a short presentation. Dr Brundtland emphasised the need to have USA on board, and the Commission welcomed the idea.

PARTICIPANTS

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

- **Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland,**
- Marc Danzon, Regional Director WHO/EURO
- David Nabarro, Executive Director, Director General's Office, WHO/HQ
- David Heymann, Executive Director, Communicable Diseases Cluster, WHO/HQ
- John Martin, Director, WHO Office at the European Union, Brussels

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- **Commissioner Byrne**
- John Bell, Byrne Cabinet
- Robert Coleman, Director-General SANCO
- Fernand Sauer, Director SANCO/G
- Bernard Merkel, Head of Unit SANCO/G/1
- Antonis Lanaras, SANCO/G/1

- **Commissioner Lamy**
- Isabelle Garzon, Lamy Cabinet
- Roderick Abbott, Trade Deputy Director General
- Paul Vandoren, Head of Unit TRADE/F/1
- Lena Sundstrom, Unit TRADE/F/1

- **Commissioner Busquin**
- Kurt Vandenberghe, Busquin Cabinet
- Octavi Quintana, Director, RTD/F

- **Commissioner Nielson**
- Kristian Schmidt, Nielson Cabinet
- Lieve Franssen, Head of Unit DEV/B/3
- Helene Bourgade, Unit AIDCO/C/4

- **Mr Rolf Annerberg, Head of Commissioner Wallström's Cabinet**
- Tomas Grönberg, Wallström Cabinet
- Véronique Angot, Principal Administrator, ENV/C/2

Conclusions

Second High Level Meeting

between the European Commission and the World Health Organisation

6 June 2002, Brussels

The **second High Level Meeting** took place on 6 June 2002 in Brussels. The following conclusions were agreed:

- **General co-operation:** Both organisations agreed that the new framework of co-operation established by the exchange of letters in December 2000 is proving very successful in developing their co-operation. Over the past two years WHO and the European Commission have developed a productive partnership at the policy level.
- **Communicable diseases:** Both organisations agreed to strengthen further their co-operation in the fight against communicable diseases and to improve surveillance structures and capacities. WHO agreed that the Commission would be fully involved in the revision process of the International Health Regulations. It was also agreed that an exchange of officials in this field, starting with the secondment of a WHO official to the Commission, would go ahead as soon as possible.
- **Bio-terrorism:** Both organisations agreed to strengthen their co-operation and co-ordinate efforts through the establishment of appropriate bilateral links to improve health security and to better prepare for and respond to the deliberate use of biological, chemical and radio-nuclear attacks to cause harm.
- **Tobacco:** WHO welcomed the first phase of the Commission's anti-smoking information campaign. WHO will be included in the expert group following up and advising the campaign. The Commission pledged its full commitment to the successful completion of the negotiations for a strong Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Both sides agreed on the organisation of a high level round-table on Tobacco and Development which should take place before the negotiating round for the FCTC in spring 2003.
- **Nutrition:** Both organisations agreed on the need to work closely together in the development of the new WHO strategy on diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases.
- **Health information:** Both organisations agreed to develop further their co-operation in the area of health information, with a focus on ensuring comparability of data, and the generation of information that can be used for health evidence. WHO and the European Commission should continue to work closely together in developing new health information systems.

- **Future priorities:** WHO and the Commission agreed that next year's collaborative work will be developed in the following priority areas: communicable diseases, health information, tobacco, health and enlargement, poverty and health and children's health and environment. These will be further explored in the second meeting of Senior Officials next October in Copenhagen.
- **Joint Action Plan on public health issues:** In addition, in order to strengthen co-operation further, both sides agreed to take forward the work on the priorities in the framework of a joint action on public health issues plan which will cover the period till the end of 2004.

DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH

- The Commission and WHO agreed to work towards a broader collaboration, with the final objective of establishing a strategic partnership as part of the work on reinforcing the EC/UN relationship in order to join forces to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in health: such as to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and have halted if not reversed the spread of AIDS, Malaria and TB by 2015.
- Both sides agreed to carry out further work in partnership for the preparations of the Johannesburg Summit.
- Both sides also agreed to work closely together to put Tobacco Control in Developing Countries on the international development agenda, including during the forthcoming high level round table.
- The two sides noted the positive developments of the co-operation on pharmaceutical policy in the follow-up of the programme on communicable diseases and the preparations for a joint programme on essential medicines in ACP countries.

TRADE AND HEALTH

- **Access to medicines:** Both organisations confirmed that they shared the same overall approach to improve global access to affordable medicines and to strengthen their co-operation in this area, and particularly in relation to tiered pricing.
- With regard to **compulsory licences**, both organisations agreed that a sustainable, balanced and workable solution needs to be reached in the TRIPs Council as soon as possible.

RESEARCH AND HEALTH

- Both sides agreed that WHO will contribute to raising the awareness of developing countries on the opportunities for collaboration in the Europe- Developing Country Clinical Trials Programme (EDCTP) and will continue to provide technical advice and

support in the process of the development of the EDCTP. In this context the Commissioner agreed to involve WHO as a partner in the EDCTP's strategy board.

- The Commissioner expressed explicitly the interest, which was welcomed by Dr Brundtland, to see his services participate in the elaboration of the WHO's 2004 report on global health research.

ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

Given the priority attached by both the European Commission and WHO to environment and health, both parties agree to further co-operate on

- children's environment and health, and on specific area relating to the implementation of the upcoming Community Environment and Health Strategy;
- the preparation of the 4th Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health to be held in Budapest in 2004- the Commission fully supports "The Future for our Children" as the overarching theme for the Conference and welcomes the process of identification of priority areas recently initiated;
- the preparation and follow-up of the WSSD in Johannesburg - WHO announced a Children's environmental health initiative which could give the opportunity to streamline, consolidate and bring coherence on the environment and health initiatives. A bilateral meeting of Dr Brundtland and Commissioner Wallström will be planned after Johannesburg to discuss results and follow-up;
- the publication of an article on Children's Environment and Health signed by Dr. Brundtland, Mrs Wallström and Mr. Byrne.
- The two parties will examine jointly how best to take co-operation forward.

PRESS RELEASE

IP/02/830

Brussels, 6 June 2002

Commission and WHO join forces to tackle health threats

The European Commission and the World Health Organisation (WHO) today held a series of high-level consultations in Brussels to take forward their global alliance in tackling health threats. Commissioners David Byrne, Pascal Lamy, Philippe Busquin and Poul Nielson as well as senior officials from the Environment Directorate-General discussed with WHO Director-General Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland joint strategies to address a wide range of health issues, including combating smoking, the fight against communicable diseases, health research, environment and health and nutrition and food safety. The issues addressed during the meetings show the extent of co-operation between the Commission and the WHO. Health and Consumer Protection Commissioner David Byrne, who chaired the meetings, concluded: "The Commission and the WHO both have roles to play, and working together has a multiplying effect. We share goals, better health for all, we are natural allies and it makes sense to pursue these objectives together."

Strengthening work on Communicable Diseases

At their second high-level meeting, Commissioner Byrne and Director-General Brundtland discussed possibilities to link the WHO with the EU communicable diseases surveillance network. Joint action plans are agreed in areas such as capacity building in applicant countries, training in crisis/outbreak management, more effective synergies between the EU Early Warning and Response System and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network. The WHO agreed that the Commission will be fully involved in the revision process of the International Health Regulations.

Development and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Poul Nielson, Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy, Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin and WHO Director-General Brundtland took stock of the ongoing and successful co-operation between the EU and the WHO on the Programme for Action on Communicable Diseases in developing countries (DCs). Both partners agreed to work towards increasing Official Development Assistance (ODA) for better health outcomes. Currently 7.4 % of ODA is targeting health. In the light of this ambitious five-year programme, Commission and WHO work together on strengthening the capacities of developing countries in the area of pharmaceutical policies in order to negotiate with and procure products from producers, in particular in Africa at the lowest possible price and the further work on a global commitment on tiered pricing. They have also worked closely together in developing new international public/private partnerships, such as the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB) and Malaria. So far, the Fund committed up to € 700 million for more than 40 developing countries.

Commissioner Busquin and Director-General Brundtland discussed the possibility of a WHO participation in health-related research aspects within the forthcoming EU 6th Research Framework Programme, notably via its priority themes on genomics and biotechnology for health, policy support and international co-operation. Brundtland agreed that the WHO will help raising the awareness of DCs on co-operation opportunities in the Europe-Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership programme (EDCTP), to which the EU will contribute € 200 million. Busquin underlined that this project is going to be the largest ever funded in the framework of EU research policy. He welcomed WHO's offer for technical advice and support in establishing EDCTP and renewed its invitation to WHO to join EDCTP as a full partner. He and Brundtland agreed to launch a more systematic co-operation, starting with a regular exchange of information on their missions, priorities and actions.

Commissioners and Director-General Brundtland agreed on major trade related issues to improve access to medicines. The Declaration on the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and Public Health made at the launch of the Doha Development Agenda underscores a pro-public health approach in international trade. The WHO welcomed the spirit in which the EU is conducting negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on compulsory licenses for developing countries lacking manufacturing capacity. It also welcomed its intention to find a sustainable and balanced solution for these countries before the end of this year.

WHO and Commission agreed that the WHO should co-operate closely, where appropriate, with the WTO and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) on technical assistance to developing countries implementing the TRIPs Agreement along the lines of the Doha Declaration. R&D and generic pharmaceutical producers must offer the lowest possible prices on a sustainable basis (tiered prices) to the poorest countries to make essential medicines affordable to all. Global co-operation will be needed to achieve this.

The Commission and WHO will continue to analyse the effects of abolishing tariffs and taxes on medicines imported into developing countries.

Tobacco control

A very good and pertinent example of the co-operation between the Commission and the WHO are the joint efforts to establish a strong and globally binding WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The Commission takes an active role in the FCTC negotiations and is fully committed to their successful completion. The WHO welcomed the EU anti-smoking information campaign targeting young people between 12 and 18 years. The WHO will be included in the expert group following up and advising the campaign.

The European Commission and WHO also agreed to work closely together to put Tobacco Control in developing countries on the international development agenda, which includes the organisation of a high-level roundtable on tobacco and development at the end of the year.

Health information

Byrne and Brundtland discussed the collaborative work to develop new health information systems, especially between the Commission and the WHO European office. They also discussed the WHO/FAO initiative on diet, nutrition and prevention of chronic diseases and ways of collaboration.

Environment and Health

Director-General Brundtland met with the Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Wallström, who is in Bali to prepare the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and officials of the

Commission's Environment Directorate-General to discuss the EU's Environment and Health Strategy, the WHO's new initiative on children's health and environment and sustainable development and future cooperation on these issues between the WHO and the Commission.

Future priorities: Joint Action Plan

Future priority areas for co-operation between the EU and the WHO include strengthening the existing partnership in communicable diseases, tobacco and health information, as well as exploring ways for co-operation in new areas such as health and EU Enlargement, poverty and health and children's health. In order to strengthen co-operation further, Commission and WHO agreed to take forward the work on the priorities in the framework of a joint action plan for the period till the end of 2004.

Background

The new partnership approach stems from an Exchange of Letters between the World Health Organisation and the European Commission in December 2000 (O.J. 2001/C 1/04). This exchange identified various priority areas, including health information, communicable diseases, tobacco, mental health, environment and health, nutrition and alcohol. It set up various co-operation mechanisms:

- high-level meetings between Commissioner Byrne and WHO Director-General Brundtland, aiming at an exchange of views and review of activities and working plans;
- meetings of senior officials to review work progress in priority areas and to examine future collaborative projects;
- coordination meetings between services to cover practical matters of co-operation.

For more information on access to medicines go to:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/csc/med05.htm> (in French, English version will follow soon)

For further information on health research go to:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/quality-of-life/leaflets/en/keyact02.html>

http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/info/conferences/edctp/edctp_en.html

For more information:

Thorsten MÜNCH: 02.29-61063
Catherine BUNYAN: 02.29-96512

Michael CURTIS: 02.29-65932
Guilio BURSI: 02.29-54721

Anthony GOOCH: 02.29-90944
Heinz MIKO: 02.29-63084

Fabio FABBI: 02.29-64174
Lone MIKKELSEN: 02.29-60567