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Chairman: Mrs. Georgette CISELET (Belgium).

AGENDA ITEM 71

International encouragement of scientific research into the control of cancerous diseases (A/4233, A/C.3/L.772/Rev.1, A/C.3/L.777) (continued)

1. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) laid stress on the very broad humanitarian aspect of the draft resolution submitted by the Byelorussian SSR (A/C.3/L.772/Rev.1). The action proposed would indirectly stimulate research into other diseases to which mankind was a prey. Encouragement of that kind was most important, particularly if given by the United Nations; it could be in the form of financial assistance, but other forms of encouragement could also be studied.

2. It was not for the Third Committee to consider the financial implications of the draft resolution. However, it could not be argued that the cost involved would be excessive. The draft resolution further had the merit of drawing the attention of world opinion to a grave problem which it might, in some measure, help to solve. Governments, certain inter-governmental and national organizations, and individuals were already concerned with action against certain diseases and could doubtless contribute funds towards the control of cancerous diseases.

3. In such fields it was particularly important to avoid duplication. In that connexion, the various United Nations organs could play a very useful role by selecting the diseases and other calamities which should be the subject of international research and by studying the best means of encouraging and financing scientific research. The World Health Organization would be in the forefront of that particular action, as contemplated in the revised Byelorussian draft. The Afghan delegation had no hesitation in supporting that draft; however, it hoped that the sponsor would consider the insertion, in the preamble, of a more general paragraph stressing the importance of measures for the international encouragement of scientific research into the control of the most serious calamities threatening mankind.

4. Mrs. MANTZOULINOS (Greece) congratulated the Byelorussian delegation on its fundamentally humanitarian initiative, which was deserving of unanimous

support in the Third Committee. The prizes to be awarded would constitute a just reward for those who devoted themselves to the welfare of mankind. The Greek delegation was sure that WHO would welcome the assistance and support of an organization as competent as the International Union Against Cancer; it would therefore very willingly support the Byelorussian draft resolution.

5. Mrs. LEFLEROVA (Czechoslovakia) said that the adoption and implementation of the resolution proposed by the Byelorussian SSR could not but promote United Nations and WHO action in the field of disease control. For many reasons, already set forth by the representative of the Byelorussian SSR (948th meeting), it was necessary and urgent that the main action should be centered on cancer control and that the scientists engaged in cancer research should be encouraged. As a member of WHO, Czechoslovakia had already exchanged information with colleagues in other countries. It would be glad to help in strengthening all action aimed at the complete eradication of cancer.

6. Much time and money were unfortunately being wasted as a result of unsatisfactory co-ordination of the research undertaken in the various countries. In that connexion, application of the provisions of the Byelorussian draft resolution would be most useful. It would make possible the degree of co-operation and exchange of information desired by all world scientists, and would increase the rate of progress. The prizes to be awarded, the value of which would be primarily symbolic, would constitute a most useful form of encouragement. Czechoslovakia supported the draft resolution.

7. Mrs. MIRONOVA (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) felt that there was no subject more stimulating than the one dealt with in the Byelorussian proposal. While mankind had already succeeded in conquering diseases which had taken millions of lives, it was still powerless against cancer, which each year took a heavy toll. The United Nations could not remain indifferent to a problem of such vast scope, which was all the more serious because little was yet known concerning its causes. The Soviet Union, for its part, was engaged in a very active campaign in which specialized centres and laboratories, as well as general hospitals, took part.

8. Success in the control of cancerous diseases throughout the world depended upon closer co-operation among scientists and more thorough and intensified scientific research. Valuable work was performed by WHO and the International Union Against Cancer, which should be supported. The United Nations, which had the necessary funds, should participate in that work. One way in which it could promote scientific research throughout the world was to award prizes to the best research-workers. That measure would supplement those to be taken when the International Health and Medical Research Year

was organized. The Soviet delegation would vote in favour of the draft resolution which, since it served the interests of every people in the world, should receive the unanimous support of the Third Committee. It hoped that the General Assembly could find the small sums needed to achieve the noble aim suggested to it.

9. Mr. BOUQUIN (France) said that the Byelorussian proposal had the merit of focusing attention upon the danger still presented by cancerous diseases despite recent scientific progress and expanding medical research. Many diseases had been conquered, but nothing could yet be done against cancer, which did not spare a single family or country. The action taken to control that disease should therefore be encouraged.

10. Cancer control campaigns had already been organized in a number of countries. Anti-cancer centres had been established in most of the towns in France, and two research centres, the Curie Foundation and the Gustave Roussy Institute, had been set up in Paris. However, national action should be supplemented by an international effort. The World Health Organization had, of course, been concerned with the question for many years. The Twelfth World Health Assembly had adopted, for the intensification of medical research, a programme which included research into cancer. ^{1/} The World Health Organization did not work alone but co-operated with other specialized agencies, particularly FAO and UNESCO, and various scientific organizations. One of the latter was the International Union Against Cancer, which was concerned primarily with the co-ordination of scientific research. However, the Union did not have any official connexion with the United Nations. The General Assembly could therefore get into touch with it only through WHO, the specialized agency concerned. The revised Byelorussian draft resolution was an improvement upon the original text in that it no longer disregarded WHO. Nevertheless, it placed WHO on an equal footing with the International Union Against Cancer. The sponsor should therefore revise the draft still further in the interests of co-ordination and clarity.

11. Consideration of the financial implications of the draft resolution was a matter for the Fifth Committee. He wished, however, to comment on the principle involved. The awarding of prizes was perhaps not the best way to encourage the efforts of scientists, most of whom placed devotion to science far above honour and fortune. It might be better to use the money represented by the awards for the purchase of equipment or the provision of fellowships. While the French delegation did not object to the awarding of prizes, it felt that it would be more reasonable to invite the World Health Assembly to consider what measures—including, if necessary, the awarding of prizes—could be taken to encourage scientific activity.

12. Cancer control was a purely humanitarian problem which should unite the Third Committee and not divide it. He hoped that the Byelorussian delegation would consider the suggestions made to it and submit a draft which would more readily command unanimous support.

13. Mr. BARRATT (Union of South Africa) believed, as did, unquestionably, the great majority of the members of the Third Committee, that work on the control of cancerous diseases should be encouraged and international co-operation in that sphere developed. His delegation wished to draw attention, however, to the important question of the proper co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies. In that connexion it should be borne in mind that the Economic and Social Council had at its twenty-eighth session agreed to draw the Assembly's attention to the desirability of consulting with the specialized agency concerned before adopting any project or proposal of direct concern to that agency (see A/4143, para. 584). In the field of cancer control, WHO was directly concerned and should be left the greatest possible freedom of action. The General Assembly should not commit itself to any line of action before WHO had been able to consider it. The World Health Organization could always refer any particular aspect of the matter, such as the possible awarding of prizes, back to the General Assembly, preferably through the Economic and Social Council. Although the General Assembly had not yet adopted any procedure such as that suggested by the Economic and Social Council, no decision should be taken which would run counter to the principle of effective co-ordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies.

14. Mr. OSEGUEA (El Salvador) said that, as a medical practitioner, he could not regard the serious problem of cancer with indifference. He had listened with keen interest to the statement by Mr. Kiselev, the Byelorussian Minister of Foreign Affairs (948th meeting). In most countries, including those of Latin America, scientists were at grips with the problem and some had even gone so far as to sacrifice their life to their mission. To avoid a situation in which parallel research had been carried on and identical discoveries made simultaneously in different countries, as had often happened in the past, before the advent of adequate means of communication, international co-operation in that sphere should be strengthened. He would therefore vote for the Byelorussian draft resolution.

15. Mr. BEAUFORT (Netherlands) said he would make a few remarks of a purely provisional nature. None would deny the seriousness of the problem of cancer or the urgent need for energetic action in that field. The General Assembly should not, in the form of a resolution, express its views on the subject of activities within the purview of a specialized agency, however, unless that agency had clearly failed in the performance of its tasks. It certainly could not be said that WHO had failed to perform its task satisfactorily. The General Assembly should be all the more careful to avoid assuming the functions of the specialized agencies in view of its own heavy workload. With regard to the establishment of prizes, he wondered why the draft resolution spoke of prizes to be awarded by the United Nations. The World Health Organization had already established two awards, one of which was given for achievements in the field of social medicine. Perhaps that award could be granted for cancer research; he would welcome enlightenment from the WHO representative on that subject.

16. Mr. EL-FARRA (Jordan) pointed out that despite the efforts made by WHO and the specialized inter-

^{1/} World Health Organization, Twelfth World Health Assembly, resolution WHA12.17 of 26 May 1959.

national agencies and the numerous conferences of experts which had been held in Europe, the United States of America, the USSR and other parts of the world, the causes and cure of cancer remained unknown. The percentage of deaths attributable to cancer was approximately the same in the Soviet Union and the United States of America. The problem therefore existed in all countries irrespective of their ideology, and it could be solved only through international co-operation. The General Assembly might, by means of a suitable resolution, enable doctors and scientists to work in close collaboration for the good of all mankind. The establishment of prizes was an excellent means of stimulating research. The expenditure involved, which would be insignificant compared with the outlay for arms, would not be too heavy a burden for the Member States or the Organization. In adopting the Byelorussian draft resolution, the General Assembly would not be encroaching on the field of competence of WHO. The Assembly was empowered, under Article 13 of the United Nations Charter, to make recommendations for the development of international co-operation in the field of health and, moreover, there were several references to WHO in the text of the draft, including one in paragraph 2 of the operative part.

17. Princess PINGPEANG YUKANTHOR (Cambodia) said that in view of the ravages of cancerous diseases in all the countries of the world, she was grateful to the Byelorussian SSR for having submitted a draft resolution on that subject; her delegation would give that draft resolution its support.

18. Mr. SUTANTO (Indonesia) pointed out that the campaigns conducted by WHO and UNICEF against tuberculosis, malaria and yaws were not entirely world-wide in scope because those diseases were most prevalent in the under-developed countries. Cancer, on the other hand, was prevalent throughout the world and therefore constituted a truly international problem. Despite the efforts of WHO, the International Union Against Cancer and private foundations and institutions, cancer was one of the few diseases whose causes and nature remained a mystery. Consequently, the scientific efforts now being made nationally and internationally must be intensified and co-operation developed in such fields as epidemiology. The General Assembly was empowered under Article 13, paragraph 1 (b) of the Charter to adopt measures such as those envisaged in the Byelorussian draft resolution, and WHO was fully qualified to award prizes for outstanding work on cancer. The expenses involved would not place too great a strain on the United Nations budget. His delegation would therefore vote for the draft resolution.

19. Mrs. KUKHARENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) recalled that it was the duty of the United Nations not only to maintain peace but also, in the terms of Article 55 of the Charter, to promote solutions of international economic, social and health problems. It was with those responsibilities in mind that the General Assembly had at its thirteenth session adopted a resolution on the organization of an International Health and Medical Research Year (resolution 1283 (XIII)). Medical research was one of the most appropriate fields for international co-operation and today, more than at any time in the past, doctors were exchanging knowledge and data. While they knew how to combat most diseases, however, they were still powerless to control cancer.

That disease, which was very widespread in highly industrialized countries and especially in urban areas, claimed two million victims yearly throughout the world. Accordingly, scientific work on cancer should be encouraged. Progress had already been made and Ukrainian scientists had done their part by conducting research on the causes of cancer and the role of the nervous system in metastasis, by endeavouring to develop vaccines and medicaments for the treatment of cancer and the like. She hoped that all the members of the Third Committee would vote for the draft resolution, the adoption of which would facilitate the solution of a strictly humanitarian problem.

20. Referring to the statement made by the Netherlands representative, she said that considerations of precedence should be left aside in dealing with such a serious problem as that of cancer control. Moreover, the United Nations did, so to speak, take precedence over the specialized agencies with regard to competence. Likewise, the arguments advanced by the Union of South Africa were hardly acceptable because they too were based on considerations of precedence.

21. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said that he had listened with great interest to the statement made by the Chairman of the Byelorussian delegation at the preceding meeting. Cancer caused ravages in all countries of the world and, in spite of the work of scientists and doctors, the number of deaths attributable to it was continually rising. The increase was due only partly to the lengthening of the average age; cancer struck at people of all ages. In order to combat that scourge more effectively, close co-operation between scientists and research workers of all countries was essential. The Byelorussian proposal was worthy of unreserved support.

22. The institution of prizes was one of the most important measures proposed in the draft resolution. The fight against cancer was certainly a long one which could not be carried on in a purely disinterested manner. Besides being the reward for praiseworthy efforts, the prizes awarded by the United Nations would draw public attention to the work of scientists, which was too often unknown, and to the non-political work of the United Nations. The award of scholarships might also be considered. The financial implications of operative paragraph 1 were not very great and should not prevent the Third Committee from examining a draft resolution the aim of which was eminently social and humanitarian.

23. With regard to the questions raised by the South African representative, he pointed out that the General Assembly should be free to make any decision it considered useful, for it was the Assembly which must, in the first instance, encourage international economic and social co-operation.

24. He thought that the remarks made by the French representative concerning the precedence to be given to WHO were fully justified. In order to bring about agreement between the differing views, he suggested the insertion in the third preambular paragraph of the words "and by non-governmental organizations in particular" after the words "World Health Organization".

25. Mr. KETRZYNSKI (Poland) was very pleased that the Third Committee was devoting its attention

to questions with such a practical bearing and with such a real and lasting interest as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and scientific research into the control of cancerous diseases. Everyone knew of the ravages caused by cancer; two million people died each year from that disease. It was a terrible scourge to mankind and it was the duty of the competent United Nations body to study the problem.

26. The Byelorussian delegation was proposing positive action and practical measures. Scientific prizes would undoubtedly serve a useful purpose. The untiring efforts of scientists, however disinterested, deserved to be rewarded. The institution of prizes would help to strengthen future research and supply scientists with the material means which were too frequently lacking. Some would object that endowment funds existed which already awarded scientific prizes. At a time when international organizations were playing an ever-increasing part in all spheres and when the spirit of co-operation was developing, the United Nations could and must encourage scientific research by the institution of prizes. There were, of course, other ways of helping research, but they came more within the competence of Governments.

27. He did not think that by instituting scientific prizes the United Nations would be encroaching on the sphere of WHO. However, he would be pleased to have the opinion of the WHO representative on that matter.

28. The financial implications of operative paragraph 1 of the Byelorussian draft resolution would be extremely small. An expenditure of \$25,000 a year would not overload the budget of the United Nations. If the plan for general disarmament which had been submitted to the Assembly were put into effect, much larger sums could be devoted to scientific research and to the control of cancerous diseases. His delegation supported the draft resolution unreservedly.

29. Miss BERNARDINO (Dominican Republic) said she had listened with much interest to the statement of the Chairman of the Byelorussian delegation. She would be pleased if the WHO representative would give his views on the doubts expressed by some delegations.

30. The CHAIRMAN announced that the WHO representative would speak at the next meeting.

31. Mr. CUEVAS CANCINO (Mexico) referring to a remark made by the South African representative, pointed out that the Economic and Social Council, at its 1089th meeting, had decided not to adopt any resolution concerning co-ordination between international organizations, because the question had not been studied with sufficient thoroughness. The Council had been satisfied with stating the Co-ordination Committee's views on the matter in an appendix to its resolution 743 D (XXVIII), and with expressing the same views in paragraph 584 of its report (A/4143); the Council's decisions would not, therefore, stand in the way of the adoption of the Byelorussian draft resolution.

32. In accordance with rule 154 and 155 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the CHAIRMAN asked the Secretary of the Committee to state what the financial implications of the draft resolution before the Committee were.

33. Mr. SCHWELB (Secretary of the Committee) said that, pending further clarification and subject to whatever views WHO might express, it would seem that the draft resolution would require an amount of \$100,000 every four years, beginning in 1962, assuming that the intention was to finance the proposed prize awards from the regular budget of the United Nations.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

34. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the time limit for submitting draft resolutions or amendments to item 71 of the agenda should be fixed for Monday, 9 November, at 10 a.m.

It was so decided.

35. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the list of speakers in the general debate should be closed on Monday, 9 November, at 3.30 p.m.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.