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Comments by the Director-General of the World Health Organization
on the report of the Executive Director of UNFPA on support
to contraceptive research and development
(documents DP/1982/36 and DP/1982/36/Add.1)

1. Contraceptive research and development is one of the major components of the WHO Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (WHO/HRP). This Programme is in its eleventh year of operation and is reckoned among the Organization's most successful endeavours. Its 1981 annual report, which is available to any member of the Governing Council who might wish for it, describes how 80 countries, 55 of them developing countries, collaborate with one another and with the Organization in planning the Programme's activities, implementing them and making available to developing countries the knowledge and technology derived from these activities. It is the only international programme of contraceptive research and development within the United Nations system.
2. The documents presented to the Governing Council by the Executive Director of UNFPA deal with substance and also contain proposals about contraceptive research development that would thus seem to have merited more than the "only most preliminary discussions with WHO" referred to in paragraph 18 of document DP/1982/36. This is all the more so since the document contains recommendations about internal administrative modifications to WHO. After the meeting in January 1982 of UNFPA's Advisory Group on Contraceptive Development Research, to which the Organization was not invited, the Director-General of WHO urged immediate consultation and WHO participation in the second meeting of the Advisory Group, but his suggestion was apparently not found constructive. The Governing Council is now asked to choose among different options when the necessary groundwork of consultation has not been carried out in the view of the Director-General of WHO.
3. WHO would agree with UNFPA's Advisory Group that there is a need for increasing support to contraceptive research and development. The figure suggested of 5 per cent of UNFPA's programmable resources would go some way towards meeting the needs of the field, although contraceptive research and development and related activities could absorb a great deal more. It is not, however, solely "by providing funding" that UNFPA can hope, as suggested in paragraph 3, "to play a major catalytic and leadership role in the field", nor "stimulate and co-ordinate research and development efforts". The addition to the UNFPA staff, suggested in paragraph 69 of

document DP/1982/36/Add.1, of one senior technical officer, would hardly seem adequate to meet these new objectives of UNFPA, which are the first policy issue which the Governing Council is being asked to consider.

4. The technical expertise required for such a leadership and co-ordination role is presently available in WHO/HRP. Setting up a second secretariat within the United Nations system to discharge the same functions would probably lead to duplication, misunderstanding, and unnecessary expense. Within the context of WHO's mandate to co-ordinate health-related research, WHO/HRP brings together annually the major agencies engaged in funding and conducting contraceptive research and development; a complementary WHO-organized inter-agency meeting focuses on operational and psychosocial research in family planning. The agencies participating in these meetings have stated clearly that they consider co-ordination and collaboration in these areas of research to be successful.

5. WHO is glad to note the recognition given by UNFPA's Advisory Group to the substantial progress made by WHO/HRP in the first decade of its work. It welcomes the Group's recommendation that "UNFPA should commit itself to provide long-term financial support to HRP at an increased level". However, the Organization can see no reason for making, as is proposed, this long-term support contingent upon changes in the organizational arrangements of WHO/HRP. The proposal is to change this Programme from a WHO programme to an UNFPA/World Bank/WHO programme, with a similar organizational structure to that of the World Bank/UNDP/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR).

6. There is general agreement that WHO/HRP, upon whose managerial structures TDR was largely modelled, has been highly effective and has responded rapidly and flexibly to the demands of WHO's Member States and to the guidance given to it by its Donors' meetings. There is, in fact, a triumvirate in WHO/HRP bringing together, in an integral involvement, Member States, the scientific community, and the Donors to the Programme, using the Programme as their instrument.

7. Two other WHO Special Programmes have recently been established, that on Diarrhoeal Diseases and the Expanded Programme on Immunization. In both cases simplified organizational structures were agreed upon by donors and recipients because in both diarrhoeal diseases and immunization, one organization, WHO, had the specific mandate in the United Nations system.

8. WHO sees no technical, financial or managerial reasons to change the present organization structure of WHO/HRP which is simple and efficient, with UNFPA contributing as one Donor, though a privileged one, among several. In 1978, the Governing Council directed the Fund to make a four-year commitment to the Programme, starting in 1979 at \$1 million and building up to \$2 million by 1982. WHO would highly value it if the Governing Council would decide on a new long-term UNFPA commitment at a higher funding level.

9. Another proposal before the Governing Council is for the Fund to devote 2 per cent of its programmable resources to providing assistance to other organizations engaged in contraceptive research and development. The four organizations mentioned in this context (document DP/1982/36/Add.1, paragraphs 77-81) can, no doubt, make a case for additional funding. However, considering the access

to substantial national resources in the country where these organizations are based WHO can find no convincing argument in the documents before the Governing Council for the Advisory Group's recommendation that UNFPA provide support to such organizations at a time when its sister agency, WHO, is unable for financial reasons to meet the demands of its Member States for collaborating in research and institution strengthening for contraceptive development and other aspects of research in family planning.

10. The second in-depth five-yearly assessment by the Donors of WHO/HRP is at present under way. As a parenthesis it is regretted that senior staff members of UNFPA invited to be members of this panel were unable to take part. This assessment addresses itself to the Programme's performance, administrative mechanisms, co-ordinating function and future directions. Besides an extensive examination of documents and meetings in Geneva, the assessment panel is making visits to collaborating centres, projects and government authorities, and having discussions with donor Governments and with the major agencies conducting contraceptive research and development. The assessment panel is aware of the issues being presented to the Governing Council and will be making its recommendations in mid-July 1982. Its report will be submitted to the technical and strategy-making body of HRP and to the next meeting of Donors to the Programme in November 1982.

11. WHO hopes that the Governing Council will direct UNFPA to continue and increase its support to WHO/HRP. Should support be made contingent upon changing the organization structure of the Special Programme, the views would have to be obtained of the policy-making mechanisms of WHO/HRP, including its Donors, and of the governing bodies of WHO.
