

**WORKING GROUP OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON STREAMLINING
THE GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS OF PAHO**

CE/WGG2/SR.3

Summary record of the third meeting
Friday, 24 March 2006

Chairman:

Nick Previsich

Canada

The meeting was called to order at 9:00.a.m.

**ITEM 5: CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES REQUIRING FURTHER
ATTENTION, AS FOLLOWS: (continuation)**

**ITEM 5.2: Revised Terms of Reference for the Subcommittee on Planning and
Programming (continuation)**

The CHAIRMAN recalling that consensus had already been achieved on the reorientation of the SPP, drew attention to the proposed resolution and its Annex, in which the items that needed further discussion, namely, the periodicity of meetings and membership of the Subcommittee, were clearly marked. Some views had already been posted on the web site.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) said that the Working Group would not be able to approve the terms of reference until it had discussed agenda item 7 on nongovernmental organizations. It was also her understanding that the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) were not regular reports and therefore should not necessarily be included in the list of functions.

Dr. JIMENEZ (Area Manager, Legal Affairs) agreed that the JIU reports should be deleted as a separate item and included in the evaluation of programs and initiatives, where similar reports and notes could also be accommodated.

Ms. CAMPBELL (Barbados) asked whether the monitoring of economic and social factors that affected health conditions had not been considered important enough to be included in the revised terms of reference, or whether that item, too, had been included in the evaluation of programs and initiatives. She also wondered whether the financial statements to be sent to countries would be brief statements, or the full financial statements that transparency would demand.

Dr. JIMENEZ (Area Manager, Legal Affairs), supported by Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) said that the audit report was a biennial one that alternated with the Director's interim financial report, which was probably the report that would be issued in 2006. It was a full report to the extent that it was subsequently incorporated into the biennial report of the External Auditors.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) proposed that the item "the audit plans" in section 2.1 should be amended to read: "the audit plans of the External and Internal Auditors and any other relevant reports including those submitted by them to the Executive Committee".

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) wished to comment on the fact that the Committee should take responsibility for monitoring gender equality among the Organization's professional staff and admitting and annually evaluating nongovernmental organizations in official relations with PAHO. He noted that it had been decided at the previous meeting that another proposed resolution would be drafted that would specify who would be in charge of guaranteeing continuity in matters of gender equality, a task

that, as he recalled, would fall to the Area of Family and Community Health as something specific within the Secretariat's customary mechanisms. It had been proposed in the last sessions of the Subcommittee on Women, Health, and Development that the Organization place greater emphasis on gender equality in all its programs and that progress in this regard issue be reviewed biennially in the Executive Committee. Consequently, he believed it should not be the function of this Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration to deal with gender issues or the annual evaluation of nongovernmental organizations. His reasoning was that the Subcommittee was responsible for budgetary, programming, and financing issues, rather than technical matters.

The CHAIRMAN said that those concerns could be taken up in greater detail under agenda items 5.3 and 7.

Mr. TOBAR (Argentina) differed with the delegate of Cuba, stating that what they were talking about was gender inequalities among Organization staff, not policies on gender inequalities in health at the global level. He proposed that the Organization's workforce have the same opportunities.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) said that, as set out in the terms of reference, it was an administrative function, and as such was appropriate to the Subcommittee; a policy or technical function would be more appropriate to the Executive Committee.

Mr. TOBAR (Argentina) said that in his country, in order to guarantee gender equality in hiring, all selection committees must have at least one or two women. As he understood it, the function of this new subcommittee would have lean a little in this direction, establishing selection committees with representation of the various actors to guarantee this equality in the workforce. This is what had been proposed in one of the reports examined last year in the SPP, which was then presented to the Executive Committee.

Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) said that the revised terms of reference were very specific in that they were written in terms of reports and documents. What appeared to be missing were the advisory and input functions in respect of the process and methodology of planning, including the discussion at the last SPP of what constituted a plan or a program. Another item might therefore be added to the terms of reference that had an overarching perspective of that role.

With regard to the monitoring of health conditions, it was useful to have a committee such as the SPP look at environmental scanning. That task was not included in the terms of reference as they stood.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica), referring to the question of gender, agreed with the delegate of Argentina that gender issues should indeed be addressed in the Organization. She added that it was not only important to ensure representation on selection committees, but to see to it that the call for nominations itself did not discriminate against women.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) agreed with the delegates of Argentina and Costa Rica. However, he reiterated that the mission and evaluation of nongovernmental organizations in official relations with PAHO should not be included in the Subcommittee's functions.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) said that it had been transferred to the SPP because, at its first session, the Working Group had decided that the Subcommittee would in future undertake program planning, budgeting and evaluation, which would include the administrative processes of admitting NGOs into the program of work.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) pointed out that the Directing Council had approved the new budget policy that was going to be or was already being implemented this year, and within the mandates proposed, there had two applications of that new Organizational budget policy and biennial a evaluation of the performance of this policy that would be presented the Directing Council. In her view, a specific function of the SPP should be to evaluate budget policy in the search for greater equity in budget allocation. This was a substantive function of the SPP. Regarding NGOs, she believed that the SPP should indeed exercise some function in this regard if the Organization was allocating a budget for NGOs; in that case, there should be a specific chapter that would be examined in the SPP, not so much on governance and relations with NGOs, but a report on the resources that the Organization in support of those NGOs or that were requested by them.

Ms. CAMPBELL (Barbados) endorsed Dr. Sealey's call for the Subcommittee to look at technical issues, particularly where there might be a health threat to the Region,

and to assess the need for budgetary or administrative changes to support the Organization's ability to manage the situation.

The CHAIRMAN said that although the Working Group had previously indicated that the SPP would not be looking at technical issues, Barbados' suggestion that it might examine such issues, possibly on a case-by-case basis, such as in the event of a pandemic, might be acceptable.

It was so agreed.

The CHAIRMAN, referring to the periodicity of the meetings, asked whether the Working Group felt that any change was necessary to the SPP's practice of meeting once a year in March on dates determined by the Executive Committee.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) suggested that, if the new Subcommittee was to focus on purely administrative matters, it should meet, like its opposite number in WHO, immediately before the Executive Committee, after the books had been audited, and again immediately before the Directing Council.

Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) said that although that might be possible where some of the simpler matters were concerned, it would not work for something like the Strategic Plan. The SPP had been the main committee for reviewing the plan in detail and evaluating other reports, so that improved documents went forward to the Executive Committee. If that was no longer to be the case, the United States' proposal would be feasible, but the revised versions of the Plan and other documents would not reflect the same input. It might therefore be better to

indicate that the Committee would meet at least once a year, thereby providing the option for a second meeting if necessary.

Dr. GARCIA (Deputy Director) said that he could fully support the United States' proposal from the point of view of efficiency, but not from the point of view of effectiveness, as there was a need for more substance in the documents that were prepared for Member States.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) questioned the usefulness of a meeting of the Subcommittee on Program, Budget and Administration when there were no audited financial reports to examine.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the Subcommittee would be dealing with administration and planning matters as well as budgeting.

Dr. KEAN (Director, Governance, WHO) said that the process proposed by the United States was the same as that followed at WHO whereby the Program, Budget and Administration Committee (PBAC) met just before the Board, then reported to the Board, which in turn forwarded the report to the Health Assembly. Although it had been proposed, during discussions on the reform of the Board, that WHO should adopt the PAHO model, it had finally been agreed that the timing would be maintained and that the PBAC report would be taken up at an early stage in the Board so that it fed into items well in advance of them being tabled. The PBAC, in its report to the Board, also included recommendations on any changes it considered necessary. If the recommendations were approved, restructuring work took place between the Board and

the Health Assembly. The suggestion that PAHO's Subcommittee should meet at least once a year was a wise one. Unfortunately WHO did not have that flexibility.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) wished to know what person or body would convene the Subcommittee if they opted for greater flexibility.

Dr. KEAN (Director, Governance, WHO) said that the PBAC recommended, and the Executive Board convened, extra meetings, in accordance with the amended terms of reference.

Ms. CAMPBELL (Barbados) said that with the expanded terms of reference there might well be a need for extra meetings, and it was important to have the necessary flexibility to accommodate them. As one of the tasks of the Subcommittee would be to give the Organization early warning of a major health problem, she wondered whether the decision to call an extra meeting always had to be left to the Executive Committee.

The CHAIRMAN replied that it was clear in the Rules of Procedure that the Executive Committee determined the dates, periodicity and subject areas.

Dr. KEAN (Director, Governance, WHO) pointed out that the last function listed, "any other matter assigned to it by the Executive Committee" could be another vehicle for convening an extra meeting, if the Executive Committee had entrusted the Subcommittee with certain work.

The CHAIRMAN said that given the different positions on the question of periodicity, the Working Group would have to recommend further discussion in the Executive Committee.

Turning to the question of membership of the Subcommittee, he reminded the Working Group that of the seven members, four were Executive Committee members elected to the Subcommittee by the Executive Committee, and the other three were designated by the Director.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) pointed out that what they were examining was the need for flexibility in the meetings of the Subcommittee, and here he considered it proper for the Executive Committee to decide the date and length of such meetings. In years in which the budget was discussed, it might be necessary to prolong the session of the Subcommittee, as it would be for the periodic examination of an external audit. In such cases, it should be the Executive Committee who decided the date and frequency of the meetings, which at the very least would have to be annual. If it had to meet more than once a year, the Executive Committee, depending on the matters under review, could approve the convening of more than one meeting annually as well as the dates of such meetings.

Concerning the composition of the Subcommittee, he proposed that it consist of five members: three from the Executive Committee and two designated by the Director, depending on the matters to be discussed. He believed it would be prudent for each member to designate a delegate and some alternates.

The CHAIRMAN said that contrary to Cuba's proposal, the suggestion in the Governing Bodies had been for a wider membership, some countries calling for the entire membership of the Organization to be represented, others questioning the continued membership of members of the Executive Committee. Antigua and Barbuda, as he recalled, had been one of the countries that had felt they had no opportunity to serve on the committees.

Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) said that the designation of three members by the Director was a way of broadening the membership.

The CHAIRMAN said that in view of the divergence of views both in the Working Group and the wider membership, the question of membership of the Subcommittee would also need to be discussed again in the Executive Committee.

Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) said that perhaps a way should be found of identifying a pool of Member States interested in being selected. She knew of no particular criteria used by the Director for designation, except that some countries might have been appointed on account of their particular experience or expertise.

The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Director might also have been trying to ensure good geographical representation.

Mr. BAILÓN (Mexico) wished to know what justification there was for the decision that the Director should choose three more countries to represent him on the

subcommittee if not precisely to ensure geographical representativeness in that body. He proposed to put it explicitly in writing, as follows: “In order to ensure the geographical representativeness of the subcommittee, the Director shall choose three Member States that are not members of the Executive Committee.”

Ms. CAMPBELL (Barbados) said that it would not be a good idea to reduce the membership at a time when the terms of reference had been expanded and geographical representation needed to be taken into account. There should be a way of allowing the Director to designate countries with experience in the items included in the terms of reference.

Mr. TOBAR (Argentina) expressed his country’s concern about the conclusions of the report of the common inspection, which said that the cost-effectiveness ratio of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming was rather negative, since its cost was higher than the impact of the decisions that it made. After discussing internally how this could be improved, some defended the hypothesis that the composition of the Subcommittee should be broadened; however, it was argued that this could imply higher costs without necessarily improving the quality of the decisions made in the Subcommittee. Serious consideration should be given to what mechanism would improve the quality of the decisions made. In this regard, the Representative Offices in each country should promote a more in-depth discussion of all the matters germane to the SPP or the new Subcommittee on Program, Budget, and Administration.

The speaker believed that in this educational function, the Representative Offices would have to play a more active role.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) said that what they were examining was the desirability of creating a new subcommittee--not the old Subcommittee on Planning and Programming, but a one new with new functions. Up to now they had been considering the composition and number of people on the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming, which had seven members, four from the Executive Committee and three designated by the Director, based on the specific matters to be addressed. Since a new subcommittee was going to be established, the speaker felt that the designation of three members by the Director would be excessive and proposed reducing the number to two. These two people, moreover, should be well-versed in the matters that would be dealt with in the Subcommittee. He furthermore proposed reducing the number of members from the Executive Committee to three, because the new subcommittee would not deal with technical matters, but only planning and budget. He also believed that the composition of the subcommittee and the selection of its members should not be based on geographical criteria but rather their expertise in the area that would be discussed in the subcommittee. In short, his proposal was to reduce the number of members on the new subcommittee to five.

Dr. JIMENEZ (Area Manager, Legal Affairs) said that from a legal point of view, based on the rules of procedure and governance structures, subcommittees were derived from the wider membership of the committees, that in turn were derived from the wider membership of the Governing Bodies. However, that did not rule out the possibility of a more innovative solution. With regard to the timing of meetings, she confirmed that the

external audit reports were issued in April, the published report usually being available in early May.

Dr. GARCIA (Deputy Director) confirmed that the Director designated countries for their technical expertise as well as for geographical reasons. The aim with the new Subcommittee was to improve the quality of decisions, as Argentina had mentioned, and quality was dependent on expertise.

The CHAIRMAN, speaking on behalf of Canada, said that it was up to the countries to ensure, through their choice of delegates, that the necessary expertise was provided. Neither the Director nor the Executive Committee could do that.

Mr. BAILÓN (Mexico) said that his concern was knowing how to judge between the nature and spirit of what prevails today and what actually happens. If it was necessary to guarantee expertise, then that surely would determine which three countries would be invited by the Director, based on the agenda, on the items to be addressed. Second, he assumed that if what happened in reality was that a country with experience in vaccination, for example, was invited and the issue was going to be taken up by the SPP, then the country would bring an expert in vaccination. If that was the spirit, they would have to work to make it clear to all the countries that the three countries invited by the Director were coming to participate in specific cases because of their experience and that they should bring people who were experts in the areas that would be discussed. Finally, he proposed that the composition remain the same, since he did not understand the problem or complication posed by the current composition.

The CHAIRMAN said that Mexico's question was a valid one and probably the best compromise: to keep the numbers as they were. The question of what the Director looked for in designating countries to the Subcommittee might best be taken up with the Director at the Executive Committee.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) said that in the discussions on PAHO in the 21st century they always talked about the need for progress in transparency. She pointed out that no one knew how observers and guests were selected; that is, the members of the Executive Committee that were selected through a process within the Executive Committee itself. Neither did she recall at what point it was communicated to the Executive Committee which countries had been invited, or if one came to the SPP meeting with the guests. In her view, the issue of the selection procedure was more important than the number of guests, since it was her impression that the countries did not really know what criteria were being used to invite people. She assumed that these criteria had to do with geographical representation, a mechanism to strike a balance in the representation of the countries, but one that no doubt also responded to the Director's governance needs. If the Executive Committee was elected by the countries and the SPP, in turn, was elected by the Executive Committee--that is, from 30-something countries, nine were selected, and from those nine, a group of three were chosen to go to the SPP, with some others added to increase geographical visibility and improve expertise, then for the sake of greater transparency, she wanted to know why this mechanism had been established.

Dr. JIMENEZ (Area Manager, Legal Affairs) replied that the concept was reflected only in the terms of reference of the SPP. Without knowing how or why the membership of the SPP was determined in the way that it was, she suggested that concerns might be met if all members of the Subcommittee were elected by the Executive Committee, and experts in different fields invited as needed, without being classed as members.

Dr. LAMY (Area Manager, Governance, Policy and Partnerships) wished to clarify something for the Minister of Health de Costa Rica. When the invitation to the SPP was sent out, it mentioned the countries that the Director had invited to the Subcommittee; that is, from that date forward, all the Member States knew who had been invited to the SPP and, moreover, all the countries that wished to could attend the SPP meeting as observers. In light of the delegates' questions about the criteria for that new subcommittee, he proposed that some criteria could perhaps be set for selecting the countries that would be invited to the new subcommittee. He also mentioned the possibility of using communication technology in the future so that the rest of the Member States, who could not be physically present at the meetings of the subcommittee, could follow its deliberations directly and participate in them, thus facilitating the participation of the greatest number of countries possible.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) noted that the Organization normally covered the expenses of the four members of the Executive Committee that are on the SPP but wanted to know if it also covered those of the three guests.

Dr. JIMENEZ (Area Manager, Legal Affairs) said that the guests were like members; i.e. they were members designated by the Director. This was specified in the SPP's current rules of procedure. Although she did not know exactly why it had been done that way historically, she confirmed that when the three members came to participate, they were invited by the Director but served as members of the SPP. Thus, their expenses were covered.

Dr. GARCIA asked whether Mexico's question had been intended as a proposal.

Mr. BAILÓN (Mexico) reiterated that his delegation had no problem with the Subcommittee having seven members and reaffirmed his proposal to keep it that way. Those who were are not members could also attend as observers and participate and if, moreover, technology was employed, those who did not come could actively participate in the meetings. He noted, however, that lack of transparency in selecting the guests, more than in setting criteria, is a major problem, and it was therefore necessary to focus on the issue of procedure. In his view, if were established that there would be three members who were not part of the Executive Committee, that rule could applied only if this group clearly set the criteria for designating those three additional members and the procedure to be followed.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) emphasized that the SPP was a body involved in the governance of the Organization that was related in some way to the Executive Committee, but whose composition was different; that is, it consisted of four members of the Executive Committee and three members invited by the Director. The Director of PAHO had the power to designate those three members, and nowhere did the

criteria for their selection appear to be established, be they technical or related to geographical representativeness or internal issues specific to the very governance of the meeting. Therefore, he did not know why the issue was being debated.

The CHAIRMAN said that the item was on the agenda because it had been identified at the first session as an issue requiring further discussion. Concern had also been expressed at the last meeting of the Executive Committee that the committees always seemed to comprise the same countries, and that not all the countries of the Region were given the same opportunity to contribute to their work.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) said that if technical matters were to be removed from the purview of the Subcommittee, there was no reason why the discussion should focus on technical qualifications or why they should be used as a criterion for determining invitees. His delegation could not support Mexico's proposal: regardless of whether the Organization invited a particular individual, it was the prerogative of the United States Government to send whom they pleased.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) said that as the Subcommittee was being asked, in addition to reviewing the program and budget, to help change the thrust of the Organization's thinking, it would be a mistake to reduce its numbers. The Subcommittee seemed to be working well. Its most recent meeting had been geographically representative, technically diverse, and there had been sufficient debate and input. Instead of attempting to change the numbers, therefore, the Working Group might consider requesting the Director to work with the Chair of the Subcommittee to decide

who else should be invited, on the basis of the agenda, so that the criteria for selecting the additional three were absolutely clear.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) stressed that the SPP consisted of four members of the Executive Committee and three people invited by the Director-- actually three countries, not people, invited by the Director.

Dr. LAMY (Area Manager, Governance, Policy and Partnerships) clarified that it was the countries, not the people, who were actually invited by the Director as members to participate in the SPP meeting in person and that they could be members of the Executive Committee or not.

Dr. JIMENEZ (Area Manager, Legal Affairs) pointed out that when she said that it had been agreed, she meant that it had been agreed in the document that was under review. Outside the rules of procedure and the mandate of the SPP, it was not agreed anywhere else that these people must be members of the Committee.

Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) pointed out that the terms of reference of the SPP had been approved by the Executive Committee on behalf of the entire membership of PAHO. A subcommittee of seven was a good size, and the designation of members from outside the Executive Committee made it possible to bring in countries that were interested in, and therefore committed to, the matters at hand. In view of the change in the nature of the Subcommittee, as Cuba had noted, the Working Group could consider increasing the number of elected members, bearing in mind that the disadvantage of selecting members for a particular meeting was that they

might serve on the Subcommittee for only one year, or it could leave the numbers as they were but consider whether the ratio was appropriate.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) said that her intention had been to emphasize the importance of technical planning skills and the need to strengthen the capacity of the Subcommittee's membership to enable it to undertake the new thrust. Her revised proposal, therefore, was to maintain the current numbers, but increase by one the number elected from the Executive Committee, and reduce to two the number designated by the Director in conjunction with the President of the Executive Committee.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) noted that the current composition of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming was seven members, three of which the Director had the power to designate, and that the Rules of Procedure stated: according to the specific topics of the meeting. When creating a new subcommittee, the essential thing to bear in mind was whether it was justified to continue having the Director designate these three members. He reiterated that more information was needed about the criteria used by the Director in selecting these other three members who were not on the Executive Committee, so they could reach a decision on the final composition of the subcommittee. In his view, there could be seven, five, or three members, but what was important was that the decision be made when they had all the information, bearing in mind, moreover, that the essential thing was not the number, but that the composition of the new subcommittee be consistent with the new functions assigned to it.

Mr. ARAÚJO FERREIRA (Brazil) commented that, actually, in a way the subcommittee had the same rationale as the Executive Committee, and he did not

understand why the Executive Committee itself could not do the work of the subcommittee, even if it were necessary to prolong the session. Moreover, he did not see the difference between seven or nine members, nor in what measure the invitation was extended to the countries and not specific people. The country was invited to participate and sent someone who might or might not be an expert. This could be done the same way by asking the members of the Executive Committee to include some experts in the topic in their delegations. They were talking about a subcommittee of the Executive Committee, with four members from the Executive Committee and three members from the outside designated by the Director. The speaker noted that even if another country were invited to send members, only those seven had the right to vote, while the other five members of the Executive Committee, as part of the Executive Committee, probably did not, since it was not stipulated anywhere, and he wondered how a subcommittee of the Executive Committee could rescind a member of the original Committee's right to vote.

The CHAIRMAN, summing up, said that the Working Group appeared to agree that the meetings should be held once a year, and that a special meeting might be needed to deal with specific issues as they arose, a matter that would be determined by the Executive Committee. The outstanding issue was membership. More information was needed on its history; there needed to be a stronger rationale for the selection of the three countries, and different models might be considered, including the size of the membership. That item would therefore be indicated as requiring further discussion in the Executive Committee.

Item 5.3: Role and status of the Subcommittee on Women, Health and Development versus the establishment of a technical advisory group

The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the proposed resolution on the Subcommittee on Women, Health and Development, the terms of reference of a technical advisory group, and the terms of reference of the existing Subcommittee. The items to be addressed included Cuba's comments and proposal that the new body should report to the Unit of Family and Child Health, and a proposal by Argentina that the new body should be an advisory group to the Director.

Mr. TOBAR (Argentina) recalled that at the previous meeting, several countries had observed that the matter of gender equality and health had become part of the institutional framework in the majority of countries in the Region and that that subcommittee was in a way a response to the need to formulate policies on these issues at a time when there was less institutional infrastructure than existed today. In this regard, the respective technical unit had already been created. He maintained that his country believed that, stressing the idea of supporting policy-making in the issue of gender equality and health, they could consider the creation of a Director's advisory committee or advisory group, similar to Advisory Committee on Health Research, the ACHR. Such a group would provide an institutional framework with minimal operating costs, and it could be comprised of technical staff and governmental and nongovernmental organizations linked with the issue of gender equality.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) said that, according to what Dr. Gamboa had told her and after the analysis undertaken in Costa Rica, the discussions of December had revealed the Organization's undeniable progress in addressing the issue of gender equality. It was also undeniable that the countries had made progress in learning how to include not only gender variables, but gender analysis in the search of equality.

Nevertheless, the real concern was ensuring that any decision they made would not undermine these gains; that is, how to ensure that they would not be lost. Gender issues should not necessarily be handled by a technical unit responsible for family issues, since the people involved should be those who had conducted the situation analysis, not the family analysis.

The CHAIRMAN said that that, at its first session, the Working Group had sought to ensure that the gains made were not lost, hence the suggestion to create a mechanism other than a subcommittee. Other mechanisms were also possible and could be discussed at the current session.

Dr. LAMY (Area Manager, Governance, Policy and Partnerships) said that at the present time, the Gender, Ethnicity, and Health Unit was directly under the Assistant Director. It was not under the Area of Family and Community Health in the current structure but directly under the office of the Assistant Director, precisely to promote a cross-cutting approach that would not be confined simply to family health.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) stated that her comments stemmed from Cuba's suggestion that the unit that handles matters related to the family be informed. That was where they would also have to see which unit, not only which body, but which unit --or who-- would receive that information.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) said that his delegation was anxious to ensure that the same body did not continue under another name. The visibility and cross-cutting nature of the new body reporting to the Assistant Director rather than to the Unit

of Family and Child Health, might enhance the stature of its work and help to ensure that gains were not lost.

Mr. TOBAR (Argentina) called attention to the institutions of the Inter-American system that deal with gender equality and noted that Puerto Rico had recently addressed these health-related issues. There was no need to fear that the gains or achievements would be reversed, since they now had institutions, actors, and NGOs that were very involved in the area, and they were the ones who would keep an eye on governments to make sure there was no turning back.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) wondered whether working directly with programs in countries and maintaining the unit under the Assistant Director would be enough to maintain the gains made.

The CHAIRMAN recalled that the suggestions made during the earlier discussions, namely to establish an advisory group or technical advisory group as a vehicle for reporting a specific program of work within countries, had been in response to that concern. A technical advisory group was not a subcommittee under another name. It had a different responsibility, different modus operandi, and was less formal at country level.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) believed that their proposals were good. At the previous meeting he had mentioned that there had been agreement on the need to make gender a cross-cutting issue throughout the Organization--that is, all units and programs of the Organization should address this issue, regardless of the fact that there was a specific unit like the Gender, Ethnicity, and Health Unit devoted to it. Gender

issues would lose ground to the extent that member countries did not devote sufficient attention to them. At the end of the day, it was the countries who in their day-to-day policies and operations made gender issues part of the work of the entire Organization and the entire country, because it was not just a matter of health, but an issue for society as a whole. The speaker confessed that he was not in a position to make a definitive pronouncement on the relevance of creating an advisory group on this issue. *A priori* it seemed to him that it could entail unjustifiable costs for the Organization.

The CHAIRMAN said that technical advisory groups were created from time to time to deal with specific needs, such as immunization and health research. The feeling at the last session had been to set up a technical advisory group that would report regularly to the Executive Committee, as a means of ensuring that the issue of gender equity maintained a high profile.

Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) said that technical advisory groups were usually set up to enable the Organization to benefit from Member States' knowledge and expertise in particular areas on a regular basis. Referring to paragraph 2(b) of the proposed resolution, she suggested that the expression "gender orientation" would emphasize orientation of programs, policies and plans, and might be more relevant than "gender sensitivity" which had a more individual connotation. In discussing any change, the Working Group should bear in mind the need to enable the Director to develop an Organization to run the programs as he or she thought fit. Furthermore, the effectiveness of a unit depended on where it was placed in the Organization and whether it had the capacity and authority to influence the Organization's work. Instead of identifying a specific unit, therefore, the Group might

wish to indicate that the unit should be at a very senior level and that its work should be able to affect all programs across the board.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) said that the Working Group should consider in greater detail what the terms of reference of a technical advisory group might be before taking a decision. In paragraph 2(b) of the proposed resolution, the word “gender” on its own, or possibly “gender perspective” would be sufficient.

The CHAIRMAN said that terms of reference could not be drawn up as a precondition for approval, as technical advisory groups were established for the different programmatic areas. As a compromise, however, the new Subcommittee or the Executive Committee might be requested to review the terms of reference if a technical advisory group was established.

His interpretation of the issue of gender equity was that it should be a cross-cutting theme within the Organization to ensure that it was adequately reflected in the health reports issued by the technical advisory groups. Using the word “gender” on its own, therefore, would have little meaning; “gender equity” might be appropriate.

Dr. RADIX (Grenada) said that “gender sensitivity” would relate more to specific issues, and mainstreaming gender sensitivity in all technical aspects would make it an institutionalized policy issue.

Mr. TOBAR (Argentina) asked whether the President had not proposed that the text refer to the sensitivity of gender equality questions.

The CHAIRMAN said that, if there was no objection, the words “gender equity and sensitivity” would be used at the beginning of paragraph 2(b), and a further amendment would be added at the end of the paragraph to reflect the Working Group’s wish that, should a technical advisory group be formed, its terms of reference should be discussed by the Executive Committee.

It was so agreed.

ITEM 7: REFORM AND SIMPLIFICATION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH PAHO

The CHAIRMAN drawing attention to the relevant documents, said that the Working Group needed to consider the relationship between PAHO and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and any changes that might be necessary to enhance that interaction.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) said that the work of evaluating the applications submitted by the NGOs and assessing their contribution to PAHO had traditionally been the responsibility of the Standing Committee. Its practice had been to meet once a year, either over lunch or in the evening during meetings of the Executive Committee, to discuss around one third of the NGOs on which documentation was provided in advance. Although refinements had been introduced in recent years to improve the process, there was room for further streamlining and simplification. That might be achieved by disbanding the Standing Committee and giving the new Subcommittee the task of strengthening relations with and evaluating the applications and contribution of the

NGOs, a change that would be consistent with PAHO's results-based approach to programming.

The CHAIRMAN said that that proposal would mean a more regular and thorough review as part of the work of the successor to the SPP.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) said that he was not certain what the proposal was. Up to that time there had been a Standing Committee that met every four years to review relations with NGOs and offer suggestions to the Executive Committee, but from what he understood, Canada was proposing that a special committee be established under the Subcommittee.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) explained that the four members of the Standing Committee changed each year, met informally and did not discuss matters in any great depth. To make the process more professional than it had been in the past, the task of assessing and reporting on the NGOs should be transferred to the new Subcommittee.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) stated that the importance of NGOs had been growing over time, as had their numbers, both international and national, and that the contribution of these organizations to multilateral agencies had also been growing. Thus, they were a group that required more attention than they had been receiving. Any decision would have to take this trend into account. If it were understood that the subcommittee would pay greater attention to NGOs, his position would be favorable.

Dr. LAMY (Area Manager, Governance, Policy and Partnerships) said that from the standpoint of the Secretariat, new role for the subcommittee or a new subcommittee

would make it possible to link relations with the NGOs to the Organization's programming processes; in other words, it might also enable the new SPP to include a review of relations with the NGOs in its report, as well as proposals for their admission, so that the Executive Committee could make the respective decision.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) asked whether the mechanism would change by moving the task to the new Subcommittee, and whether that additional activity might in any way impede the Subcommittee's smooth functioning.

Dr. SEALEY (Area Manager, Program Budget and Program Support) recalled that the SPP and the Executive Committee had considered, over time, making the work of the Standing Committee more analytical and requiring more reporting from the NGOs. The substantive amount of work involved could mean occasionally having to extend the Subcommittee from three to four days. The problem was not the informal nature of the meetings, but the level of the analytical work done by Member States before the meeting, the specificity of the decisions taken, and the lack of regular evaluations of the continued relevance of individual NGOs to the work of the Organization.

Dr. KEAN (Director, Governance, WHO) said that the process at WHO took place at two levels: through a small unit that worked full-time on the mechanics of implementing the principles guiding NGOs in official relations with WHO, and through the designated technical officer, who maintained the relationship with the NGOs at the global level, sometimes through regional counterparts. Like PAHO, WHO had a Standing Committee of the Executive Board that met during the Board's January session to review new applications, and, every three years, to assess the NGOs in official

relations with the Organization, which occasionally resulted in relations being terminated, usually because of a change in the nature of the NGO itself. The Standing Committee seemed to work effectively, but preparation was undoubtedly the key to its work.

Dr. ST. JOHN (Barbados) said that as a former member of PAHO's Standing Committee she could confirm that its work was conducted rapidly and with little preparation, reflecting the way in which the subject was currently handled within the Organization. Rather than giving more work to the Subcommittee it might be better to review the way in which the Standing Committee operated and how its work could be made more rigorous

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) endorsed the position of Barbados on the question of relations with NGOs. She stated that the previous year, at the meeting in Argentina, she had participated in the group to confirm the relevance of several NGOs, and said that it had been a meeting without any real depth. On another occasion, at a meeting in Canada on the problem of chronic diseases, attended by the Assistant Director of PAHO, a group of Latin emigrants met with him and mentioned that it was developing public health materials targeted to the Latinos of that country; this, when PAHO already had thousands of similar, effective materials. The speaker was convinced that there should be better communication with these groups to take the work that they were doing and add it to overall efforts in public health. Several NGOs were working in AIDS, for example, and a dialogue should be opened with them. She endorsed Barbados' comment that what they should be requesting perhaps was a study on how PAHO related to NGOs; on whether there should be a new proposal for those relations and what articulation there

should be with the Governing Bodies, for there was a very strong movement to promote the participation of civil society through various entities, whether NGOs or not. A study of this type would yield mechanisms, articulation, and lessons learned that would provide information to the SPP and the Governing Bodies about the work of the NGOs.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) said that while it was useful to discuss the engagement of NGOs in public health work in the Region, the Working Group first needed to consider how and why NGOs were admitted to try and identify where the problem lay. Was insufficient documentation from the Secretariat preventing a robust discussion on the value of the NGOs to the Organization, or were Member States themselves not properly preparing? In the latter case, entrusting the work to a different body would not solve the problem.

Dr. RADIX (Grenada) said that in addition to their assessment and admission, NGOs had to be integrated into the overall planning process. The amount of time taken by the new Subcommittee to carry out the extra work would certainly be offset by the resulting increase in efficiency and effectiveness.

Ms. DICKINSON (Canada) fully endorsed that comment. There were two aspects to the problem. First, the administrative process of admitting, assessing or ending the relationship with NGOs, which would be the responsibility of the new Subcommittee. Secondly, the fact that the new Subcommittee would be reporting to the Executive Committee including on the quality of the background documentation, would ensure thoroughness and professionalism than had been lacking in the past. Whether the Executive Committee wished to enter into the more technical programmatic approaches

of incorporating more civil society into its programs, an aspect which, judging from the documents, appeared to have been neglected since 2000, was a separate issue.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) agreed with the speakers who had preceded to him that two issues were being examined. On the one hand, there was the question of how relations with NGOs would be handled, and on the other, the regulations that govern official relations between PAHO and these NGOs. WHO had a permanent structure in place for dealing with NGOs, notwithstanding that one of its governing bodies also considered this issue and drafted the proposals to maintain or discontinue relations with an NGO. The speaker wanted to know whether the Secretariat currently had some permanent mechanism to deal with the matter of NGOs, outside of the attention accorded them by the Governing Bodies.

Dr. LAMY (Area Manager, Governance, Policy and Partnerships) indicated that, through different units and in part, the External Relations Unit, the Organization monitors the various nongovernmental organizations and promotes relations with them. Some of these units--for example, the HIV/AIDS, Nutrition, and Family and Community Health units-- have very close ties with nongovernmental organizations. With regard to intensifying and improving collaboration with nongovernmental organizations and perhaps reviewing the progress made, the Secretariat could prepare a note with proposals that could be shared with the Member States. He also mentioned that one of the Roadmap initiatives that was being developed was the creation of a regional health forum, whose purpose was to open opportunities for the discussion and debate of public health issues with academia, nongovernmental organizations, and other civil society institutions. In

addition, there might be more room for better procedures to studying candidates and review NGOs in official relations with the Organization in the new subcommittee than in the Executive Committee, which often had little time to take an in-depth, intensive look at the state of official relations between NGOs and the Organization. They should consider whether to change the timing of the review and analysis of official relations with NGOs and the creation of the new subcommittee of the Executive Committee; they should also consider the need for the Organization to inform the Member States about the work carried out and about ways to strengthen these relations in the future. This could be done through a document presented at a future meeting of the Governing Bodies.

Mr. ABDOO (United States of America) said that it was not really useful to try and deal with the two distinct issues at the same time. One issue, accepting or rejecting an NGO, either by a Standing Committee or the new Subcommittee, was reasonably straightforward. The second very different issue was more a policy matter of how those relationships could be used to further public health goals.

Dr. SÁENZ MADRIGAL (Costa Rica) noted that indeed, they are two separate issues but that, actually, they are not so separate, because while they certainly could lead to a subsequent dispute and it would perhaps be necessary to put draft a document in order to have a policy in this area, at the end of the day, this would have an impact on new people and on the rules and regulations.

Dr. GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ (Cuba) considered sensible Canada's proposal to modify the way of reviewing NGOs in official relations with PAHO and, instead of doing it in a very formal session during the Executive Committee, include it in the functions of

a new Subcommittee on Program, Budget, Administration, and NGOs. If the new subcommittee were also given this function, it might be necessary to extend its meetings so it would have time for an in-depth evaluation. On the other hand, he thought that Dr. Lamy had made a good point when he said that there is an External Relations structure in the PAHO Secretariat that maintains relations with NGOs and that, having reviewed the documents in the file, the regulations for entering into relations with NGOs have not been reviewed since 2000. It would be also advantageous to review a document that indicates how relations with NGOs are handled by the United Nations.

The CHAIRMAN, summing up, noted that the methodology to be used for assessing NGOs, as revised in 2003, was set out in paragraph 4 of document CE132/2. There appeared to be no objection to the new Subcommittee taking on the work of admitting and assessing NGOs. However, there needed to be a more in-depth analysis of the broader question of NGO relationships with PAHO and how they should be strengthened.

It was so agreed.

The meeting rose at 12:05 p.m.