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BACKGROUND NOTE AND RECOMMENDATION BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON
THE CRITERIA FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD REPRESENTATION ON THE UNITED
NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND/WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION JOINT
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY AND THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION/UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S
FUND JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

SUMMARY

The present document has been prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1994/R.1/4 (E/ICEF/1994/13) to address the question of its representation to the UNICEF/World Health Organization Joint Committee on Health Policy and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education in the context of the decisions taken by the Board on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993. These joint committees complement the technical expertise of the respective specialized agencies and the operational strength of UNICEF. The Executive Director recommends that the membership of the two joint committees be restructured.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 2	2
II. UNICEF/WHO JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY	3 - 5	2
III. UNESCO/UNICEF JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION	6 - 9	3
IV. MEMBERSHIP	10 - 13	4
V. RECOMMENDATION	14 - 15	4

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present paper has been prepared in response to the decision of the Executive Board on the question of its representation on the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education (JCE) (decision 1994/R.1/4) and conveys the information requested on the criteria for selection expressed during the deliberation of the Board on the subject.

2. UNICEF is an operational agency which follows the technical policies and standards of the specialized agencies in their areas of competence, utilizing their technical expertise in programme operations where appropriate and when necessary. Collaboration has evolved over time with many of the United Nations agencies and it has been particularly close with WHO and UNESCO, covering the two principal areas of UNICEF operations. A unique form of collaboration between UNICEF and these two organizations has been through the mechanism of joint committees of the two respective Executive Boards to facilitate a high-level exchange of views on strategies, approaches and new challenges in areas of mutual interest. These bodies are the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy and the UNESCO/UNICEF Joint Committee on Education.

II. UNICEF/WHO JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY

3. JCHP, on which the Executive Boards of both WHO and UNICEF are represented, was established in July 1948 to advise UNICEF on medical programmes and normally meets biennially in odd years. In the decade following the establishment of JCHP, the shift in emphasis in the joint work of the two organizations led to an increasing need for a review of the functions of the Joint Committee.

Terms of reference

4. Based on the deliberations of JCHP at its eleventh session in October 1958, and subsequent consultations between the two secretariats, the two Boards decided in 1960 to revise the terms of reference of JCHP as follows:

(a) To review from time to time the overall needs of mothers and children in the health field and to recommend to the UNICEF Executive Board the types of health programmes having as their objectives the improvement of the health of mothers and children that could appropriately receive UNICEF support;

(b) To receive and review progress and assessment reports presented either by the Director-General of WHO or the Executive Director of UNICEF on different types of jointly assisted health activities and to recommend to the UNICEF Executive Board any reorientation of health activities that may be necessary;

(c) To consider any other matters of joint interest to WHO and UNICEF referred by the Executive Board or the secretariats of the two organizations and to recommend subsequent action to UNICEF and, when appropriate, on non-technical matters to WHO;

(d) To report to the UNICEF and WHO Executive Boards on the foregoing matters.

The revised terms of reference were approved by the WHO Executive Board at its January 1960 session and by the UNICEF Executive Board at its March 1960 session.

5. Over the years, JCHP has served as the launching ground for many joint initiatives, the most notable being the International Conference on Primary Health Care, held at Alma Ata in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1978. It also began to serve as a forum for policy exchanges and policy dialogue, operationalization of the policies adopted, development of joint and common strategies and review of progress made. It regularly reviewed the implications of the policy decisions of the two Boards and also brought to the attention of the Boards emerging issues and trends in child health and other related areas. The papers submitted for consideration by JCHP are prepared jointly by the secretariats and decisions are reached by consensus. In addition, JCHP played an important role in formulating a set of time-bound health and nutrition goals, which served as the basis for the goals for child survival, development and protection in the 1990s that were endorsed at the World Summit for Children and adopted by the UNICEF Executive Board.

III. UNESCO/UNICEF JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

6. UNICEF and UNESCO have collaborated on projects, particularly in primary education and teacher training, since the early 1960s. At its 1980 session, the Executive Board of UNICEF reviewed UNICEF policies on education and collaboration with UNESCO. At that time, the Executive Board, encouraged by the successful experience of JCHP with WHO, requested the secretariats of UNICEF and UNESCO to explore the possibility of forming a joint committee, drawing from the Executive Boards of the two organizations, to facilitate a high-level exchange of views on policy and approaches and to strengthen cooperation at the country level. Ensuing discussions between the two secretariats at that time, however, were not conclusive. The dialogue was revived again in 1988 and JCE was established by the two Boards in 1989.

Terms of reference

7. The terms of reference of JCE were defined in more general terms, reflecting the emerging form of collaboration between the two organizations. The main purpose of the Joint Committee, which would have no decision-making capacity, was to facilitate a high-level exchange of views on strategies, approaches and new challenges in areas of mutual interest to the two organizations and to expand the cooperation between UNESCO and UNICEF. The Joint Committee would review situation assessments and progress reports presented by both organizations.

8. The Joint Committee would consider matters of mutual interest to UNESCO and UNICEF and could make subsequent recommendations, as appropriate, to the respective Executive Boards for consideration and possible action. Such recommendations would relate to fields of action common to the two organizations

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and would draw the attention of the two Executive Boards to new challenges and important trends in those areas.

9. The Joint Committee would hold a regular meeting every two years in even years and could hold special meetings at intervals in between as required.

IV. MEMBERSHIP

10. Both joint committees comprise six members from each of the respective Executive Boards, which also designate them. UNICEF Executive Board members on the joint committees originally comprised the chairmen of the Executive Board and of the Programme Committee as ex officio members, four representatives elected in their personal capacity and two elected alternates. Elections for JCE were to be held in odd years, to alternate with those for JCHP in even years, based on the past practice of a joint committee meeting being held only biennially.

11. However, JCE met twice in its first biennium (1989-1991) and JCHP met twice in its 1990-1992 biennium. Given the foregoing, and in light of the fact that the ex officio members would, of necessity, change annually, the officers of the Executive Board expressed, during the 1991 regular Board session, their concern that a full complement of membership in such joint committees should be guaranteed to the extent possible.

12. Accordingly, in decision 1991/3 (see E/ICEF/1991/15), the Executive Board amended the criteria governing the election of UNICEF Board representatives on both joint committees as follows: "(a) the number of elected alternates should be increased to four; (b) in electing its representatives to the joint committees, the Board should ensure the election of those who represent countries that will be on the Executive Board for at least two additional years".

13. There are no written rules governing the composition of the UNICEF representation beyond the decision of the Board that representatives may not serve for more than two terms consecutively unless they become ex officio members. However, prevailing unwritten conventions developed over the years and generally followed stipulate that due regard should be given (a) to electing representatives who have experience in both the UNICEF Executive Board and in the areas of health or education, as appropriate; and (b) to ensuring a balance between developing and industrialized countries.

V. RECOMMENDATION

14. Both joint committees have played an active and important role in focusing global attention on the health and educational needs of children and women, mobilizing and welding the comparative strengths of UNICEF, WHO and UNESCO. They have also provided forums for high-level dialogue and have been instrumental in developing joint and common strategies and follow-up plans to major initiatives. They have also played an extremely useful role in formulating goals and strategies for the three organizations.

15. In view of the changed Executive Board structure as reflected in decision 1994/R.1/1 on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 48/162 (E/ICEF/1994/13), the Executive Director recommends that the Board approve the following recommendation:

1. Decides to reconstitute the composition of its membership on the joint committees as follows:

(a) Chairman of the Board (ex officio);

(b) Five members, elected in their personal capacity and representing the five regional groups;

(c) Five alternate members elected in their personal capacity from the same country and ministry or department, as appropriate, as the members in order to provide continuity and familiarity with the subject matter, as well as to ensure equitable geographical representation;

2. Also decides that members and their alternates should be senior officials with relevant professional expertise and experience to be able to provide technical guidance and policy advice to the concerned organizations;

3. Further decides that, in electing its representatives to the joint committees, the Board should ensure the election of those who represent countries that will be on the Executive Board for at least two additional years;

4. Decides that representatives may not serve for more than two consecutive terms unless they become ex officio members.
