



World Federation of Public Health Associations

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NGOs and the World Health Organization

WFPHA Resolution No. 97-2
adopted by WFPHA General Assembly
at 31st Annual Meeting 5 May 1997

The World Federation of Public Health Associations,

Aware that the World Health Organization (WHO) is re-examining its programs, principles, and objectives -- including the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) -- and developing strategies for the future through its renewal of the Health-for-All policy;

Noting that of the over 180 NGOs currently enjoying official relations status with WHO, most are largely oriented towards medical care and specific diseases;

Concerned that many groups, such as consumer, development, human rights, social welfare, and environmental organizations, are not officially represented in WHO;

Noting that WHO has focused attention on the social gaps in health status within and between countries in both the North and South and that many of the NGOs not represented in WHO give high priority to equity concerns;

Noting further that, due to WHO requirements, most NGOs in official relations are international groupings rather than national- or community-level organizations;

Recognizing that NGOs operating at the local level have a proven record of flexibility, innovation, effectiveness, and efficiency in recognizing and addressing community needs and could be highly effective in representing grassroots concerns before governments and intergovernmental organizations; Observing that, while technology (especially information technology) offers many opportunities for improving public health, national and local NGOs in developing countries are especially limited in their access to and training in technology;

Convinced that local, national, as well as international NGOs have made substantial contributions to the advancement of health and well-being in countries throughout the world and hold the potential for making even greater contributions in the future;

APPEALS to WHO to ensure that NGOs representing the broad range of public health concerns at the local, national, and international levels are able to participate actively in the work of WHO, especially in the area of advocacy and policy development, and in WHO-supported activities in member countries;

URGES WHO to create mechanisms to facilitate greater NGO access to and training in information technology relating to health;

ENCOURAGES WHO to assist member governments in enhancing their own relationships with NGOs in their countries and in establishing a coherent framework for national-level partnerships.

URGES WHO to support and enhance the work of the NGO Forum for Health.