

Ninth World Health Assembly

THE World Health Organization (WHO), one of the ten Specialized Agencies of the United Nations, has as its objective "the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health". Once a year WHO holds an Assembly attended not only by delegations from member states but also by representatives and observers from other United Nations bodies as well as from non-governmental organizations and medical and scientific associations. The ninth World Health Assembly met in Geneva from May 8 to 25. Representatives from 70 states attended, and the Canadian delegation was led by Dr. G. D. W. Cameron, Deputy Minister of National Health.

This year's Assembly was notable for a number of accomplishments. Already one of the largest of the Specialized Agencies, WHO expanded its membership to 88 states when the Assembly agreed to grant full membership to the newly independent states of Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia; in addition the Gold Coast, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone were admitted as associate members. The ninth Assembly also approved the terms under which nine members of WHO which had been inactive for a number of years again will be eligible to participate in the work of the Agency. Five of these members—Roumania, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland—had withdrawn from WHO in 1950, and four of them—U.S.S.R., Ukrainian S.S.R., Byelorussian S.S.R., and Bulgaria—had taken no part in Agency work since 1949. When these states indicated they were again prepared to co-operate with WHO, it became necessary for the ninth Assembly to work out a formula covering their arrears and contributions.

As decided by the Assembly, the WHO programme for 1957 will again give high priority to malaria eradication. WHO is assisting with malaria control in more than 20 countries by providing technical guidance and setting up demonstration and training projects and model clinics. Particular emphasis is being placed on the urgent task of destroying malaria mosquitoes before these insects develop resistance to insecticides.

The Assembly noted with concern that, especially in highly industrialized areas of the world, rheumatic, hypertensive, and coronary groups of heart diseases are a leading and ever-increasing cause of death and that they are affecting wider segments of the population. These diseases will be given increased attention by the Agency's panels and expert committees, which will also give further study to occupational health, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, rheumatism, and geriatrics. The Assembly also approved a programme in the field of atomic energy which includes the training of public health personnel and studies of various health risks connected with radiation and radio-active waste disposal.

The Assembly decided to abolish those parts of the WHO international sanitary regulations dealing specifically with the Mecca pilgrimage. This decision will be of particular importance to countries with Moslem populations.

Special technical discussions were held on the education of nurses and their role in public health programmes.