PLENARY SESSIONS - XXVI World Health Assembly

Selected Comments made by various participants in debate

The PRESIDENT, XXV WHA (Dr Basil Layton, Canada)

... On the health front, as we have observed ourselves and learned from the unique analyses and evaluations made by the Organization, there have been new gains, while new problems have also been emerging. Mass communicable diseases have continued to recede, notwithstanding the unevenness of progress in the ever-increasing complexity of their control. The most significant results have probably been obtained in the smallpox eradication programme, which has now reached all endemic areas of the world...

The PRESIDENT, XXVI WHA (Dr Sulianti Sarosa, Indonesia)

... The eradication of smallpox has been one of the World Health Assembly's preoccupations since the first session, when it established a study group on smallpox. The series of decisions and events which followed led to the Eighteenth World Health Assembly's declaring the eradication of smallpox to be one of the major objectives of the Organization. The results of the worldwide campaign against smallpox thus launched in 1967 were quick to confirm the opinion of the Director-General of our Organization: "we can think in terms of its complete eradication within the space of the next few years." ...

Dr MOLAPO, Representative of the Executive Board

... During its review of the proposed programme and budget estimates for 1974, the Board considered a report prepared by the Director-General on the proposed programme of smallpox eradication. In reviewing this report the Board expressed its satisfaction with the significant progress made in most parts of the world towards the eradication of smallpox, and recommended that a maximum effort should be developed by the Organization and those countries where the disease is still endemic in order to complete eradication in the earliest possible time. The Assembly will have before it an updated report on the status of the smallpox programme, which it will consider under agenda item 2.3 ...

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL

... Comme je l'ai indiqué dans l'introduction de ce document, la menace que font peser les maladies transmissibles continue à diminuer. L'un des meilleurs exemples en est la régression de la variole. On estime actuellement que cette maladie ne sévit plus à l'état endémique que dans cinq pays. C'est pourquoi, entre autres conséquences, le Royaume-Uni de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord et les Etats-Unis d'Amérique ont pu réduire considérablement leurs programmes de vaccination et réaliser ainsi de substantielles économies. La campagne anti-variolique illustre non seulement l'efficacité de la coopération internationale, mais aussi l'intérêt commun de tous les peuples à combattre la maladie. L'idée que la présence d'une maladie en un point quelconque du globe constitue partout une menace est clairement exprimée dans la Constitution de l'OMS et elle est de plus en plus largement admise à mesure que le mouvement international des voyageurs et des marchandises s'intensifie. Pourtant, quelque spectaculaire que soit le succès obtenu jusqu'ici dans la campagne contre la variole, rien ne saurait justifier un relâchement des efforts. Au contraire, à mesure que la campagne semble approcher de sa fin, elle doit être poursuivie avec une vigueur opiniâtre en bénéficiant d'un solide appui international...

Mr FINDLAY (Sierra Leone)

... Control measures against the major endemic and communicable diseases have been maintained at a very high level and thanks are due to the World Health Organization for its continued assistance in this area of our activities. Yaws and Measles have been kept under reasonable control, while since April 1969 there has not been a single confirmed case of smallpox ...

Dr KALONDA OMEMA (Zaire)

... Notre délégation se propose de vous entretenis de la situation épidémiologique en République du Zaïre relative à la variole ...

Variole La République du Zaïre s'est associée en 1965 à la campagne mondiale d'éradication de la variole. La phase d'attaque du programme a débuté en novembre 1968 et a été clôturée en décembre 1971. Près de 25 millions de vaccinations ont été faits au cours de ces trois années par les équipes mobiles qui ont assuré la couverture entière du pays. Il est significatif de constater que, depuis le mois d'août 1971, aucun cas de variole n'a été signalé au Zaïre. Par contre, la surveillance sévère de cette maladie a permis de découvrir trois cas de monkeypox. La phase de surveillance et d'entretien prévue par le programme a débuté en janvier 1972 et les formations sanitaires ont effectué, pendant l'année 1972, 4 460 000 vaccinations antivarioliques.

Professor SIWABESSY (Indonesia)

... Communicable diseases and nutritional disorders are still the main health problems. With regard to communicable diseases, malaria and tuberculosis are the most prevalent. Cholera and other gastrointestinal diseases are also widespread. I am happy to report that no smallpox case has been found since the last reported case in January 1972...

Sir William REFSHAUGE (Australia)

... The success of the smallpox eradication campaign is a source of considerable satisfaction, but this must not lead us to a sense of complacency towards the communicable diseases, which can still strike without warning if we relax our precautions ...

Mr SINGHA-SUWAL (Nepal)

... It is a matter of gratification to note that remarkable progress has been made in the control of communicable diseases, like malaria, smallpox, etc.

We have expanded the smallpox eradication programme throughout the country, and satisfactory progress has been made. We are looking forward to eradication of this disease by 1975, even though the tentative date for its eradication is 1977 ...

Mr HASSAN (Somalia)

... In 1972 we had five imported cases of smallpox. Since we had organized our surveillance activity in the affected area we were able to detect these cases immediately, and although the containment measures placed a great strain on our resources we achieved results which were gratifying to all concerned. We are happy to state that no secondary cases were detected. Having organized a successful programme against smallpox, we intend to use our experience and trained manpower from this activity in a wider field of prophylactic immunization programmes against tuberculosis, measles, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, tetanus,

etc., in addition to smallpox vaccination ...

Dr KOSHKEEN (Afghanistan)

... Smallpox transmission has been interrupted in Afghanistan thanks to a well-designed and well-implemented programme in this field, carried out with the assistance of the World Health Organization ...

Mr KHADILKAR (India)

... Our programme for the eradication of smallpox has also had its impact. Greater emphasis is now being placed on surveillance measures - on early detection, notification and containment - and we are producing freeze-dried smallpox vaccine in the country to meet our requirements ...

M. AHEIDY (Mauritanie)

... notre délégation a pris connaissance du Rapport du Directeur général. Dans le domaine de la lutte contre les maladies transmissibles, les programmes de vaccination - particulièrement contre la variole, - se poursuivent et entrent actuellement dans les phases d'entretien. Pour la vaccination anti-variolique, le taux de couverture varie de 80 à 90%...

Mr P. L. MAKHUMULA NKHOMA (Malawi)

... To turn now to communicable diseases, which is a forefront scourge in developing countries, I am delighted to note that in the African Region - in order to avoid overloading national administrations and the regional programme of work, and to make for better coordination with field activities - a limited list of diseases has been established ... As for smallpox, I am again glad to report that in my country the satisfactory trend of no cases of smallpox has continued since 1969. Last year, we called in this very Assembly for no complacency as a result of the fact that smallpox was on the way to eradication. The outbreak in a European country, referred to on page 6 of your Report, is a case in point. Although our period of grace is short, since 1959 we have been actively engaged in a nationwide smallpox vaccination and surveillance programme in which BCG vaccination is incorporated ...

Mr AMYADASA (Sri Lanka)

... My country, though in close proximity to endemic foci of cholera and smallpox, has remained free of these quarantinable diseases by exercising close surveillance of all new arrivals at ports of entry, and a regular vaccination programme of infants and pre-schoolchildren is being maintained ...

Mr QAYYUM (Pakistan)

... About communicable diseases, my delegation notes with satisfaction the success achieved in smallpox eradication and containment measures in countries where a few imported cases occurred. We are particularly happy that Afghanistan and Indonesia have been successful in eradicating the disease. I take this opportunity of congratulating fellow delegates of these countries present here; their achievement is a source of inspiration to us. We in Pakistan have also taken big strides with the assistance of WHO and hope to be eliminated from the list of the "seven culprits" in the world still harbouring the disease, in the near future. In this context, I would be failing in my duty if I do not express our sincere thanks to the Regional Director of the Eastern Mediterranean for the special attention he is paying to this programme in Pakistan ...

Sir George GODBER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

... I want to congratulate the Organization on the success so far achieved in the eradication of smallpox. That now places an extremely heavy burden of responsibility upon the health authorities in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan and the Sudan, in which they have every justification for expecting our help. Their effort is not just for their own safety; it underwrites the security of the rest of us also. Twice in the last eight weeks in my country we have had to deal with the introduction of human infection with smallpox, once from without and once from within. Great effort is required and much alarm is caused and that will continue until eradication is finally complete. It will be for this Organization to consider whether we must then seek not merely the removal of smallpox as a disease, but the destruction of all remaining variola virus wherever it may be stored ...

Mr SIFAF (Ethiopia)

... With regard to the control of communicable diseases, we are pleased to note the dramatic reduction of smallpox throughout the world and the envisaged complete eradication of this disease within the next few years. In Ethiopia we are happy with the progress of the smallpox eradication campaign, and my Government will continue to give every support to this programme until this disease is eradicated within the coming few years ...

Le Dr BITARIHO (Burundi)

... S'agissant de la lutte contre les maladies transmissibles, nous sommes heureux de déclarer que la variole a été jugulée; en effet, nous n'avons eu aucun cas de variole depuis deux ans et demi, alors que depuis 1965 le Burundi déclarait annuellement des dizaines ou des centaines de cas de variole. La campagne de vaccination de masse débutait fin 1968 pour se terminer en avril 1971; elle a atteint une couverture vaccinale d'à peu près 87% de la population, elle est entrée depuis quelques mois dans la phase d'entretien, et ces activités sont intégrées aux activités des centres de santé, des dispensaires et des hôpitaux ...

Mr IBRAHIM (Sudan)

... I am pleased at this juncture to mention that the Sudan has been able to reach a stage of freedom of the entire country from cases of smallpox, marking the great efforts exerted by the working staff in the smallpox section and valued assistance by the Organization. We look forward to declaring the country completely free from the disease in line with the criteria and standards set by the Organization. This is really a bright and gratifying feature when compared with the situation last year ...

Mr SINGHATEH (Gambia)

... As we are now in the fifth year of the maintenance phase of the smallpox eradication and measles control programme, we are in a position to endorse the views expressed in the report that very significant progress has been made ...

Dr EMPANA (Congo)

... Les résultats de la lutte contre les maladies transmissibles sont certains, et la variole en est un exemple indiscutable. Ce qui à notre avis importe maintenant, c'est que les methodes adoptées et l'effort fourni par les grandes

puissances pour la lutte contre la variole soient repris pour diminuer l'incidence des autres maladies transmissibles ...

M. MBAILAO (Tchad)

... La variole n'a pas frappé au Tchad depuis de cinq ans. Malgré les difficultés que nous recontrons due fait de la géographie de notre pays, nous maintenons un taux élevé de couverture vaccinale antivariolique. Ce taux est actuellement de 87% pour l'ensemble du Tchad. Il est bien sûr inégal selon les régions, allant de 100% à 20% dans certaines régions peu peuplées et d'accès laborieux. Cette éradication de la variole a été obtenue avec l'aide substantielle de l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé ...

Dr MAKA (Guinée)

... Aucun cas de variole n'a été enregistré depuis février 1969. Quant à la vaccination antivariolique, nous en sommes actuellement à la phase d'entretien. Depuis 1971, nous vaccinons avec notre propre vaccin lyophilisé, produit a l'Institut de Recherches biologiques appliquées. Ce vaccin, mis au point en collaboration avec l'OMS est d'une qualité comparable à celle des meilleurs vaccins internationaux. Il est utilisable aussi bien pour la vaccination individuelle que pour la vaccination de masse par des appareils ped-o-jet...

Dr AL-ADWANI (Kuwait)

... the global eradication of smallpox has been much more successful than we expected. No doubt these global programmes are of great significance, not only to the developing countries but, even more so, to the developed countries. We see, for instance, that the reduction in the incidence of smallpox has encouraged the United States of America and the United Kingdom to reduce their vaccination programmes against smallpox. This step saved the United States of America alone a sum nearly equivalent to our Organization's annual budget. We sincerely hope that, with these savings in money and human life, the developed countries will contribute more to the budget of our Organization ...

Dr ABHAY (Laos)

... Le succès de l'éradication de la variole, entreprise par l'OMS à l'échelon mondial dès 1967, doit être signalé. En effet, la Région du Pacifique occidental est pratiquement indemne de ce fléau depuis 1964 et les efforts entrepris avec l'aide de l'OMS pour maintenir les pays de cette Région dans cette heureuse situation ont été jusqu'ici couronnés de succés ...

Dr HENRY (Trinidad and Tobago)

... But by far the greatest success story of the period has been, as many other speakers have remarked, the battle against smallpox. Whereas in 1967 as many as 131 000 cases of smallpox were reported from 42 countries, 30 of which were considered endemic for the disease, in 1972 there were 65 000 cases of smallpox and the disease was endemic in only six countries. Little wonder, then, that two governments have dispensed with smallpox vaccination as a routine procedure, although maintaining it for people travelling to endemic areas and for all health service staff. However, WHO has quite wisely counselled that such a policy can only be followed by countries which have highly developed health services and good epidemiological surveillance ...