



FIFTY-SIXTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

WHA56.26

Agenda item 14.17

28 May 2003

Elimination of avoidable blindness

The Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on elimination of avoidable blindness;¹

Recalling resolutions WHA22.29, WHA25.55 and WHA28.54 on prevention of blindness, WHA45.10 on disability prevention and rehabilitation, and WHA51.11 on the global elimination of blinding trachoma;

Recognizing that 45 million people in the world today are blind and that a further 135 million people are visually impaired;

Acknowledging that 90% of the world's blind and visually impaired people live in the poorest countries of the world;

Noting the significant economic impact of this situation on both communities and countries;

Aware that most of the causes of blindness are avoidable and that the treatments available are among the most successful and cost-effective of all health interventions;

Recalling that, in order to tackle avoidable blindness and avoid further increase in numbers of blind and visually impaired people, the Global Initiative for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness, known as Vision 2020 – the Right to Sight, was launched in 1999 to eliminate avoidable blindness;

Appreciating the efforts made by Member States in recent years to prevent avoidable blindness, but mindful of the need for further action,

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to commit themselves to supporting the Global Initiative for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness by setting up, not later than 2005, a national Vision 2020 plan, in partnership with WHO and in collaboration with nongovernmental organizations and the private sector;

¹ Document A56/26.

- (2) to establish a national coordinating committee for Vision 2020, or a national blindness prevention committee, which may include representative(s) from consumer or patient groups, to help develop and implement the plan;
- (3) to commence implementation of such plans by 2007 at the latest;
- (4) to include in such plans effective information systems with standardized indicators and periodic monitoring and evaluation, with the aim of showing a reduction in the magnitude of avoidable blindness by 2010;
- (5) to support the mobilization of resources for eliminating avoidable blindness;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to maintain and strengthen WHO's collaboration with Member States and the partners of the Global Initiative for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness;
- (2) to ensure coordination of the implementation of the Global Initiative, in particular by setting up a monitoring committee grouping all those involved, including representatives of Member States;
- (3) to provide support for strengthening national capability, especially through development of human resources, to coordinate, assess and prevent avoidable blindness;
- (4) to document, from countries with successful blindness prevention programmes, good practices and blindness prevention systems or models that could be modified or applied in other developing countries;
- (5) to report to the Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly on the progress of the Global Initiative.

Tenth plenary meeting, 28 May 2003
A56/VR/10

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