



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-THIRD WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Provisional agenda item 12.14

A53/27
2 May 2000

Smallpox eradication: temporary retention of variola virus stocks

Report by the Secretariat

1. In accordance with resolution WHA52.10, the Director-General took steps to respond to the concerns of Member States regarding destruction of variola virus stocks. During October 1999 and February 2000, WHO teams of international experts inspected the conditions of biological safety and physical security in which the remaining collections of variola virus are held at WHO collaborating centres: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America, and the Russian State Centre for Research on Virology and Biotechnology, Koltsovo, Novosibirsk Region, Russian Federation. The conditions in which variola virus is stored in both centres were found to be fully satisfactory with respect to biological safety and physical security.
2. A meeting of the WHO Advisory Committee on Variola Virus Research (Geneva, 6 to 9 December 1999) discussed what, if any, research on the virus was required to reach global consensus on the destruction of the remaining collections. The Committee recommended the obtention of DNA sequence information on additional virus strains and the conduct of research on novel diagnostic tests and antiviral drugs. Testing of new antiviral drugs will require animal models for smallpox which should also be developed as part of this research. The proposed programme should be carried out under the supervision of WHO and completed by the end of 2002. A full report is being submitted to the Executive Board at its 106th session.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

3. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report.

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