

Constitution of the World Health Organization

Selections from the World Health Organization (WHO) constitution, adopted by the International Health Conference held in New York from June 19 to July 22, 1946, signed on July 22, 1946, and entered into force on April 7, 1948. Full text available at <http://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf>.

THE STATES Parties to this Constitution declare, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, that the following principles are basic to the happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.

The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all.

Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease, is a common danger.

Healthy development of the child is of basic importance; the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment is essential to such development.

The extension to all peoples of the benefits of medical, psychological, and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health.

Informed opinion and active co-operation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance in the improvement of the health of the people.

Governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures.

ACCEPTING THESE PRINCIPLES, and for the purpose of co-operation among themselves and with others to promote and protect the health of all peoples, the Contracting Parties agree to the present Constitution and hereby establish the World Health Organization as a specialized agency within the terms of Article 57 of the Charter of the United Nations.

CHAPTER I – OBJECTIVE

Article 1

The objective of the World Health Organization (hereinafter called the Organization) shall be the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.

CHAPTER II – FUNCTIONS

Article 2

In order to achieve its objective, the functions of the Organization shall be:

- (a) to act as the directing and co-ordinating authority on international health work;
- (b) to establish and maintain effective collaboration with the United Nations, specialized agencies, governmental health administrations, professional groups, and such other organizations as may be deemed appropriate;

- (c)* to assist Governments, upon request, in strengthening health services;
- (d)* to furnish appropriate technical assistance and, in emergencies, necessary aid upon the request or acceptance of Governments;...
- (g)* to stimulate and advance work to eradicate epidemic, endemic, and other diseases;...
- (i)* to promote, in co-operation with other specialized agencies where necessary, the improvement of nutrition, housing, sanitation, recreation, economic or working conditions, and other aspects of environmental hygiene;
- (j)* to promote co-operation among scientific and professional groups which contribute to the advancement of health;...
- (l)* to promote maternal and child health and welfare and to foster the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment;
- (m)* to foster activities in the field of mental health, especially those affecting the harmony of human relations;
- (n)* to promote and conduct research in the field of health;
- (o)* to promote improved standards of teaching and training in the health, medical, and related professions;...
- (q)* to provide information, counsel, and assistance in the field of health;
- (r)* to assist in developing an informed public opinion among all peoples on matters of health;...
- (u)* to develop, establish, and promote international standards with respect to food, biological, pharmaceutical, and similar products;
- (v)* generally to take all necessary action to attain the objective of the Organization.