

WHA59.25 Prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment

The Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment;¹

Recognizing that more than 161 million people worldwide are visually impaired, of whom 37 million are blind, and that an estimated 75% of blindness is avoidable or curable using established and affordable technologies;

Recalling resolution WHA56.26 on the elimination of avoidable blindness;

Noting that many Member States have committed themselves to providing support for the Global Initiative for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness, known as Vision 2020 – the Right to Sight;

Noting with concern that only 32% of targeted countries had drafted a national Vision 2020 plan by August 2005;

Acknowledging the links between poverty and blindness, and that blindness places a heavy economic burden on families, communities and countries, particularly developing countries;

Further acknowledging that control of both onchocerciasis and trachoma has come about through the commitment of broad international alliances;

Welcoming the important actions undertaken at regional, subregional and international levels by Member States with a view to achieving substantial progress in the elimination of avoidable blindness through greater international cooperation and solidarity,

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to reinforce efforts to set up national Vision 2020 plans as called for in resolution WHA56.26;

(2) to provide support for Vision 2020 plans by mobilizing domestic funding;

(3) to include prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment in national development plans and goals;

(4) to advance the integration of prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment in primary health care and in existing health plans and programmes at regional and national levels;

(5) to encourage partnerships between the public sector, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society and communities in programmes and activities for prevention of blindness at all levels;

(6) to develop and strengthen eye-care services and integrate them in the existing health-care system at all levels, including the training and re-training of health workers in visual health;

¹ Document A59/12.

- (7) to promote and provide improved access to health services both with regard to prevention as well as treatment for ocular conditions;
- (8) to encourage integration, cooperation and solidarity between countries in the areas of prevention and care for blindness and visual impairment;
- (9) to make available within health systems essential medicines and medical supplies needed for eye care;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to give priority to prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment, and to provide necessary technical support to Member States;
- (2) to provide support to collaboration among countries for prevention of avoidable blindness and visual impairment in particular in the area of training of all categories of relevant staff;
- (3) to monitor progress in the Global Initiative for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness in collaboration with international partners, and to report to the Executive Board every three years;
- (4) to ensure that prevention of blindness and visual impairment are included in the implementation and monitoring of WHO's Eleventh General Programme of Work, and to strengthen global, regional and national activities for prevention of blindness;
- (5) to add prevention of blindness and visual impairment to WHO's medium-term strategic plan 2008-2013 and proposed programme budget 2008-2009 which are currently in preparation;
- (6) to strengthen cooperation through regional, subregional and international efforts with the view to achieving the goals set out in this resolution.

(Ninth plenary meeting, 27 May 2006 –
Committee A, sixth report)