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Introduction

The WHO Expert Committee on Biological Standardization met in Geneva from 11 to 18 October 1994. The meeting was opened on behalf of the Director-General by Dr F. S. Antezana, Assistant Director-General.

Dr Antezana emphasized the contribution of WHO's biological standardization programme to health programmes in Member States through the provision of biological reference materials and the establishment of minimum requirements for biological substances. WHO was able to provide only limited financial support to the programme, but that reflected the current financial situation rather than a lack of commitment on the part of the Organization. He thanked the International Laboratories for Biological Standards and their governments for the support that they provided to the biological standardization programme. He also drew attention to the rapid and continuing developments, particularly in the fields of recombinant products, cytokines and interferons, and informed the Committee of two WHO informal consultations that had been held recently on the last two topics. He noted that the work of the Committee continued to reflect technical progress in these fields.

General

Development and distribution of International Biological Standards and Reference Reagents

The Committee was informed of the distribution of international reference materials by the International Laboratories for Biological Standards during 1993 (Table 1). It emphasized that the programme was essential for the harmonization of reference materials and requirements internationally, and to facilitate the distribution and use of biological products.

The Committee was concerned to learn of the reduction that WHO had been obliged to make in the budgets of the International Laboratories, and emphasized the continuing and increasing importance of their work. It recognized with gratitude the efforts that the International Laboratories were making, with their own resources and the support of their governments, to maintain their contribution to the biological standardization programme. Nevertheless, the growing demands made on these laboratories and requests that the programme should be expanded increased concern about funding. Possibilities that should be explored included obtaining funding from other sources for specific project areas and recovering some of the costs through more realistic charges for handling and processing requests for reference materials.

The Committee therefore requested the Secretariat to review the priorities and needs for additional standards, to obtain more detailed

ɔnal Biological Standards and Reference Reagents distributed in 1993 to laboratories in WHO regions by the International ɪries for Biological Standards[a]

WHO	Number of items distributed by International Laboratories for Biological Standards					
	Amsterdam	Copenhagen	Potters Bar	Weybridge	Total	% of total for all regions
	25	92	66	0	183	1.4
	147	667	1 591	19	2 424	18.4
nean	16	105	107	2	230	1.7
	1 096	1 437	6 044	122	8 699	66.1
st	87	195	305	5	592	4.5
	4	191	830	14	1 039	7.9
	1 375	2 687	8 943	162	13 167	100.0

.aboratory of the Netherlands Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service, Amsterdam, Netherlands: items distributed during the calendar year 1993. Statens ɜtitut, Copenhagen, Denmark: items distributed during the calendar year 1993. National Institute for Biological Standards and Control, Potters Bar, Herts., items distributed between 1 April 1993 and 31 March 1994. Central Veterinary Laboratory, Weybridge, Surrey, England: items distributed during the year 1993.