
[1]**REMPAN at International level: Current Status**

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The mitigation of the public health consequences of disasters and emergencies is particularly dependent on the speed of an effective response, which in turn depends on preparedness to act, and access to information on the hazards involved. Technological disasters that cause radiation hazards are of especial concern. WHO approaches to improving radiation emergency medical preparedness and response include the development at national and international levels of a well-coordinated infrastructure for monitoring health hazards and provision of assistance. In cooperation with other international organizations, WHO participates in the development of basic standards for radiation protection. For the promotion of radiation emergency medical and public health preparedness and for practical assistance and advice to countries in a case of overexposure from any source of radiation, WHO has established the network of specialized institutions (REMPAN).

Our present meeting is held at the 10th anniversary of REMPAN. Therefore before describing the current status of REMPAN let me remind you briefly of its first steps. In 1987, partly as a consequence of the Chernobyl accident, WHO decided to expand its activities in radiation protection. It was decided to strengthen the programme on radiation emergency medical preparedness and assistance through the setting up of a global WHO-coordinated network of institutions engaged in this field. At that time there were only three WHO collaborating centres of this kind, in France, USA and USSR. As a necessary step for creating the network, the decision was taken to convene a first coordination meeting of existing and prospective WHO collaborating centres on radiation emergency and assistance. This meeting was held from 30 March to 2 April 1987. During two days the participants from 6 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, France, USSR, USA) and WHO worked at the Central Service of Protection against Ionizing Radiation in Le Vesinet (France). The group moved on to Southampton (UK) where participants completed the meeting report and prepared a coordinated plan of actions.

As a result of the meeting, the creation of REMPAN was started. In addition to the existing centres it was recommended to establish two new WHO collaborating centres in Argentina and Brazil and to extend the functions of the WHO collaborating centre in Australia to the field of radiation emergency medical preparedness and assistance. It was planned to achieve six collaborating centres by the end of 1987 and about ten centres by 1990. It is a great pleasure for me to remind you of the names of those