

International cooperation in de medical sciences and UNESCO

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Bulletin der Schweizerischen Akademie der Medizinischen Wissenschaften = Bulletin de l'Académie Suisse des Sciences Medicales = Bollettino dell' Accademia Svizzera delle Scienze Mediche**

Band (Jahr): **2 (1946-1947)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **16.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-306846>

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International Cooperation in the Medical Sciences and UNESCO.

Report made by Dr. J. Needham, F. R. S., Paris
to the Scientific Session of the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences
at the occasion of the British-Swiss Medical Conference

The present happy occasion of a more or less bilateral international medical conference after the past years of war affords an opportunity of saying a few words about the work of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation which is now in process of development. It has just taken up its permanent location in Paris, and by the end of this year the Preparatory Commission will have given birth to the Permanent Organisation.

The Division of Natural Sciences (*Sciences Exactes et Naturelles*; *Naturwissenschaften*) has the following tasks:

A. Temporary task:

To accelerate the work of scientific relief and rehabilitation.

B. Permanent task:

1. To set up an international scientific liaison service by forming Field Scientific Cooperation Offices in those parts of the world remote from the main centres of scientific and technological research (e.g. the Far East, the Middle East, and South America, etc.).

2. To facilitate in every way the work of the International Scientific Unions and their federal Council.

3. To undertake certain special tasks not at present being carried out (e.g. making available good scientific cinema films in all languages, giving financial grants for international cooperation, travel expenses, etc.; facilitating the use and dispersal of microfilms and other forms of documentary reproduction, compiling a world list of scientific institutes and scientists, etc.).

4. To cooperate with other United Nations organisations concerned with science and technology (e.g. the World Health Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organisation), and to advise the Social and Economic Council in scientific matters.

5. To take the necessary steps to inform the peoples of the world of the international implications of scientific discoveries.

6. To prepare or undertake new forms of international scientific co-operation (e. g. international astronomical observatories or nutritional laboratories, or to induce the formation of a federation of Type Culture Collections and the preparation of a world catalog of strains maintained, etc.).

In the understanding of the Secretariat of UNESCO, science means the natural sciences, *pure and applied*. The Medical Sciences are therefore fully included, and provision has been made for a sub-section of medical sciences parallel with sub-sections of agricultural and engineering sciences.

It is obvious that the Secretariat cannot be expected to include persons competent in all the branches of the sciences. It must necessarily rely, therefore, on the international bodies already existing which have acknowledged authority in their fields. In the domain of the pure sciences the position is well developed since the international scientific unions and the International Council of Scientific Unions already referred to are available. An inter-governmental organisation such as UNESCO needs the Unions (a) as generally acknowledged authorities to whom questions of wide import can be referred, and (b) as channels for international funds which may become available for cooperative scientific work. There are still some sciences (such as Physiology, Biochemistry and Pharmacology) for which no Union exists, but it is hoped that at least a permanent international Bureau will soon be established in these cases.

The domain of medicine differs from that of pure science in that while there are a considerable number of international organisations (societies, congress committees, etc.) there is nothing corresponding to the International Council of Scientific Unions, which would federate them. It is therefore proposed that in due course UNESCO should invite each of them to send a delegate to a world council of international medical organisations. Such a council could fulfil many useful functions, from the coordination of times and places for medical congresses, to the consideration of matters of wide import concerning the whole of medical science which might be referred to it by any part of the United Nations Organisation, or which it itself might initiate.

It is anticipated that similar steps will be taken in the domains of the agricultural and engineering sciences.

The organisation of UNESCO springs from the friendly cooperation of 44 member-States. Not all the members of UNO, therefore, are mem-

bers of UNESCO, but it is hoped that they will soon join. It is, moreover, possible for a State to be a member of UNESCO without being a member of UNO. The Secretary-General of UNESCO is Dr Julian Huxley, FRS. (UK.) assisted by Mr. Wilson (USA.) and Mr. Thomas (France). The Head of the Division of Natural Sciences is Dr J. Needham, FRS. (UK.) whose Counsellors are, for the Medical Sciences Dr I. M. Shukova (USSR.); for the Engineering Sciences Dr Yeh Chu-Pei (China); for the Agricultural Sciences Dr M. B. C. Guha (India); and for the Pure Sciences Dr C. Sadron (France).

We are at present forming our team and we should be very pleased to hear from any young Swiss scientists who might be interested in overseas work with UNESCO of the nature of scientific liaison.

The address of the organisation is: 19, Avenue Kléber, Paris XVIe.