

UEMO PLENUM 10 April 1999

UEMO PLENUM

LISBON, PORTUGAL, Saturday, 10 April 1999

SUMMARY REPORT

CHAIRPERSONS : Dr. Jaime Correia de Sousa, President, Dr. Romain Stein, Vice-president
PARTICIPANTS : See enclosed participation list (Annex 1)
VENUE PLACE : Penta Hotel, Avenida dos Combatentes, Lisbon

A. OPENING SESSION

The President, Dr. de SOUSA, opens the meeting. He excuses Dr. Antonio Branco, Deputy Secretary-general and Dr. Pedro Moura Relvas, Treasurer, both of whom are unable to attend the meeting because of other commitments. Dr. de Sousa elaborates on the current problems concerning the Portuguese Presidency as a result of the elections within the Portuguese Medical Association. His team, elected in Killarney on 24 October 1998 for the Presidency, cannot continue to function because it lacks support from the National Portuguese Medical Association due to different political standpoints between his team and the national Portuguese Presidency. This extraordinary Plenum meeting has been called to discuss and solve the current problems.

He proposes to discuss the vice-presidents' report on the present situation first and to establish the agenda for today's meeting afterwards.

Vice-president STEIN says that the UEMO has never experienced a situation like this before. It will be difficult to deal with the situation in a technical sense. As the Danish delegation will not arrive before noon, he proposes an agenda that starts with a report by the vice-presidents, followed by a discussion on UEMO goals and means (cf. discussion papers from Italy and the Netherlands (Annexes 2 and 3) and finishes with the election of a new Presidency. After some discussion the Plenum agrees, although some regret that the Danes will not be present when the UEMO policies are discussed.

Niek van 't Grunewold of the Dutch delegation will act as Rapporteur for this Plenum meeting.

Dr. CRECELLI (IT) believes the UEMO to be in a very confusing situation. The Plenum is in charge, however, and it should act accordingly. It is up to them to clarify the situation. He is very anxious to hear the Vice-presidents' report. He wants a clear explanation.

Dr. CHAPMAN (UK) exhorts the Plenum to focus on what they are here for. Let's not bite off more than we can chew.

Dr. ANDRÉ (B) agrees with the Italian and British delegations.

B. REPORT BY THE UEMO VICE-PRESIDENTS ON THE PRESENT SITUATION

Vice-president STEIN gives a summary of events during the UEMO Presidency meeting in Oporto on 20 and 21 February 1999. The new political situation within the Portuguese Medical Association was explained at this meeting and the proposed new UEMO team introduced. The Vice-presidents had to face facts. It was decided that a decision on the matter of the Presidency would have to be made at a Plenum on 10 April 1999. The Ordem Dos Médicos agreed to give a financial guarantee for ongoing UEMO business until the next Plenum. The Ordem also agreed to continue to organise the already planned Plenum meeting in Oporto in June.

Vice-President BUSS says he believes the UEMO was in fact paralysed since the start of 1999: a disastrous situation. The UEMO proves itself to be an unprofessional organisation: internal discussions should not hinder the UEMO, but they do! He believes it to be an awkward situation that new people suddenly appear and take over an organisation without having any knowledge of the organisation itself, its work, the people in it and of any of the international organisations and trends and developments.

President de SOUSA reports on the preparations of the incoming Presidency team during all of 1998. After the internal Ordem elections, he asked for conformation of his position. The decision was up to the Association. It refused. Those are the facts.

Dr. GOMES (P) (cf. the attached Translation, Annex 4) emphasises that the Portuguese Medical Association is focused on general and family practice. He regrets this meeting is necessary. But, as a consequence of the vote in the December elections, the UEMO Presidency team had to be changed. This decision was a purely political, not a personal one. It so happened Dr. de Sousa belonged to the party that lost and as such he lost the confidence of the new Board of the Ordem. Nobody is irreplaceable though. Family practice in Portugal is gaining ground fast. The proposed team consists only of general practitioners. The Ordem plans to do all in its power to make the UEMO successful. He makes an appeal for the trust of the Plenum or at least to give the team the benefit of the doubt.

In response to the request by Dr. BRETTENTHALER for more information, Dr. GOMES adds that in the Northern Regional Section of the Ordem dos Medicos there is now also a conflict of personalities between UEMO President de Sousa and the President of the Northern Regional Section, where the UEMO office is located. This situation is no longer tolerable. Moreover, it is a problem that Dr. de Sousa is not known in the Central and Southern Regional Sections of the Ordem.

Dr. VAN VELZEN (NL) then takes the floor and, also on behalf of all his colleagues, thanks the four Vice-presidents for all the excellent work they had to do so unexpectedly. He also thanks and pays tribute to President de Sousa, who will no longer be with the UEMO after today. This is followed by a standing ovation.

President de SOUSA thanks Dr. van Velzen for his kind words and announces to step down as soon as a new President is elected. He mentions that he was Vice-president in the Northern Regional Section of the Ordem Dos Medicos. His party lost the elections, and as a consequence he has had to step down. This is called democracy. It is now up to the Plenum to settle matters.

Dr. CHAPMAN (UK) thanks Jaime de Sousa for his honest words. Addressing the Plenum, he states that UEMO has to accept the outcome in Portugal. Confirmation of a new Portuguese team depends on its plans. Another important legal question is whether or not this present meeting is the Plenum as set out in the statutes. Most UEMO delegations are represented by only one member. Moreover, this situation has made it clear that the UEMO statutes need to be worked on to make them more complete, as present

situation clearly proves.

A discussion develops and it is concluded that the present meeting is a Plenum as meant in the statutes. When the Plenum was convened, it was at the same time suggested that members limit the number of delegates to reduce the extra costs, especially for the hosting member. The result of this suggestion does not degrade the Plenum status of this meeting.

Dr. CHAPMAN (UK) and Dr. O'CONNOR (IRE) state they do not want to interfere with internal Portuguese affairs, but suggest the present Portuguese team makes good use of Jaime de Sousa's know-how and experience in international affairs.

Dr. CRECELLI (IT) regrets the present situation and emphasises the importance of continuity in the UEMO Presidency.

COFFEE-BREAK

C. UEMO POLICIES

After the break, Dr. Eugene O'CONNOR, in conformity with his mandate, expresses his confidence in the new Portuguese delegation and the team presented.

Next Dr. MENDES LEAL (P), Presidential candidate, takes to the floor to deliver a lengthy and elaborate speech (Annex 5).

After the PRESIDENT's sigh what to do with the UEMO now, Dr. CRECELLI states that in his opinion all delegations are looking hard for ways to strengthen the UEMO. The first thing the Plenum should do now is to think about the UEMO goals and means to which every Presidency could subscribe. What is the mission of the UEMO? It needs to change course, as well as amend the statutes. What exactly do we want? We need to change the UEMO working methods. He refers to the Italian handout: "A strategy for the UEMO - Lisbon - April 1999" (Annex 2) It is clear that the Presidency should be more in charge, all year round and not just twice a year. UEMO should act better and faster; give more information, become a point of information and start using e-mail.

Furthermore, the UEMO should make itself more visible in Brussels, where the plans are made and the money comes from. UEMO, therefore, needs the services of a Brussels-based consultant and perhaps an office too. For after all, there are more than 300,000 GPs in Europe. !!

He urges to start up a discussion on change. Personally, he has been active in UEMO for 15 years. He is chairman of the Italian College of GPs and committed to change.

Dr. BRETTENTHALER (AUS) is sceptical. He is in the dark as to what happened in Portugal (with Dr. de Sousa). Crecelli's statement makes it clear that there is unease and concern within the UEMO. He has no doubts himself about the expertise and devotion of the candidates (Bewerber). In his view there are three candidates: Portugal, The Netherlands and Italy. Which candidate is best able to lead us?

President de SOUSA points out that there have been discussions about new methods in UEMO before, the last time being in Killarney in October 1998.

Dr. van VELZEN (NL) refers to the letter of the Dutch Delegation that he faxed to all delegations on Thursday 8 April 1999 (Annex 3). The letter contains the Dutch view on how the UEMO should develop itself. He believes UEMO needs a central Secretariat and a Consultant, both near the place where plans and decisions are being made, i.e. Brussels. Such officials should be competent and aware of what is happening in Brussels. He thanks and subscribes to the views of the Italian delegation. The UEMO needs to be represented in Brussels itself. The Irish Presidency may have had a little too much faith in the

Standing Committee to look after our interests, which maybe was not too wise.

Vice-president Dra. FABIAN (SW) states that the Swedish delegation was happy with the way Jaime de Sousa approached matters. UEMO should be a strong international organisation.

Dr. MENDES LEAL takes the floor and refers to the speech he made earlier. He says he will be happy to answer any questions from the delegations. He states that it is obvious that the proposed team still has to learn a lot about the UEMO from the Vice-presidents, Ireland (the former Presidency), former UEMO vice-presidents Victor Ramos and from Jaime de Sousa. The Portuguese team has an open mind. Obviously, close co-operation is essential for the benefit of the development and the cause of the GPs in Europe. The team does have national and international experience. Availability and time might be a problem once in a while, but we will work and fight hard for the cause.

Dr. MJELL (N) still sees problems and lack of clarity. He wants to know at what points the new team differs from the de Sousa team on the subject of UEMO.

Dr. LEAL answers that he and his team are eager to unite all interests with an open mind. Portugal is open to all ideas, including those put forward by the Italian delegation. He asks the members of the Plenum to give his team the benefit of the doubt.

Dr. BRETTENTHALER asks for his opinion on the relation between the GP and the medical specialist.

Dr. MENDES LEAL replies that he has gained a lot of knowledge on this subject. In Portugal, medical specialists did not think much of GPs in general. Since 1980, however, GPs have received specific professional training with the help of medical specialists. As a result, GPs are now regarded as their equals in Portugal.

Asked by Dr. BRETTENTHALER on his opinion on international developments in the GP field, Dr. MENDES LEAL replies that he and his team intend to familiarise themselves with this subject, and with Brussels too.

Dr. BUSS (SCH) expresses his doubts regarding the depth of knowledge of the proposed team of all that is going on. It could cost a year to gain the necessary know-how. A difficult situation.

Dr. O'CONNOR says that UEMO has to start thinking about a permanent Secretariat in Brussels, to which President de Sousa replies that this has not been taken into account in the 1999 budget. We have to work very quietly towards this. It might be included in next year's budget, which is to be discussed in the October Plenum in Slovenia.

According to Vice-president STEIN, there is a lot of work to be done as far as the statutes and the legal status of UEMO are concerned. UEMO has no corporate capacity for instance, as a result of which they are unable to employ staff. The President is not a real representative in a legal sense. So establishing an office in Brussels should be planned carefully. Another point of reflection is the period of Presidency. Four years is considered too long, two years too short. These important matters should be brought up for discussion soon.

President de Sousa agrees that UEMO moves through Europe like the king and court: where the king is, there is the court. He adjourns the meeting until after lunch.

LUNCH BREAK

D. VOTING SESSION

Vice-president STEIN takes the floor and suggests the Plenum should first deal with and take a vote on the confirmation of the proposed new team of Portugal. As the statutes do not regulate the present situation as such, the Plenum has to proceed step by step in accordance with the statutes wherever possible. Moreover, it is essential that all delegations unanimously agree with this approach. We cannot afford a discussion afterwards on the legality of the procedure to be followed this afternoon.

Vice-president BERGEN (NL), on behalf of the Vice-presidents, then suggests that for technical reasons, one of the Vice-presidents chairs the meeting. The Plenum agrees.

Next, Vice-president STEIN cites the contents of articles V, 3 VII, 1 and IX, 1 of the UEMO statutes, after which he proposes to put to the vote the proposed new team for the Presidency. First, there will time for questions and discussions, followed by a secret vote.

Dr. O'CONNOR questions the legality of the Vice-presidents' care-taking, actions and decisions the past two months. Vice-president STEIN replies that the statutes do not regulate the situation after the dismissal of the entire Presidency team. Therefore, the decision by the Vice-presidents to take care of the UEMO business was not only necessary, but in accordance with the spirit of Article VII, paragraph 1, last full sentence, too.

Dr. CHAPMAN (UK) supports the logical follow up and careful action of the Vice-presidents.

Asked by Vice-president STEIN to introduce the proposed new Portuguese team, Dr. MENDES LEAL introduces himself once more. He has been a GP since 1980 and, within the Portuguese organisation, has been in charge of the vocational and specific training for GPs. As stated before, Portugal has profited from other countries' experience. He has been asked to become UEMO President. To prepare himself he studied a lot of the UEMO papers. Even so, he is well aware of the fact that much remains to be done in this respect. He will have to learn from the Vice-presidents and from Victor Ramos. The Vice-presidents will serve as "our echo". His team would also call in the help from Dr. de Sousa. He intends to start up a dialogue with all delegations, to modernise the organisation (use of the net) and to start preparations for a Secretariat in Brussels.

Dr. BRETTENTHALER (AUS) believes that the Plenum is moving on the edge (am Rande) of the statutes. He exhorts the delegates not to cling too much to the exact wording of the statutes, but to think more in concepts and to act accordingly. Furthermore, he asks the Portuguese to reconsider their candidacy. Would it not be wiser for the new team to take more time to settle into the job? In the meantime, the UEMO could be represented by an interim Vice-presidency.

Dr. SANTOS (P) states that the proposed team intends to continue the work of Dr. Jaime de Sousa. The Portuguese team will make their international experience available. They will also call in the help of Ireland, and Dr. Ramos and Dr. de Sousa.

Dr. BRETTENTHALER asks again if it would not be better to have more time to settle into the job. He wonders why the Portuguese delegation does not respond to this idea. He believes it would be to everyone's advantage to fill up this 'learning period' with a Vice-presidency. To be voted down would be an affront and he emphasises to think the matter over well.

To Dr. GÁRZON (SP) it is a troublesome and confusing situation. What is the exact content of article VII? Will and can Portugal introduce another team if the Plenum refuses to confirm this team?

Vice-presidents FABIAN and BUSS both advocate an immediate decision on the proposal of in fact a second Portuguese Presidency team.

Dr. MENDES LEAL says that Portugal is not prepared to bend; the new team is not willing to consider a Vice-presidency. Portugal remains a candidate. If the new Portuguese team is not chosen, a better team will be. So much the better for UEMO. Any choice is acceptable to the Portuguese delegation.

E. VICE-PRESIDENT STEIN STARTS THE VOTING PROCEDURE

He explains that according to the statutes a positive vote requires a majority vote of three-fourths of members. He concludes from the statutes that a negative vote or outcome does not require such a majority.

He asks the Plenum if everyone agrees with this interpretation of the articles VII and IX of the statutes.

(Nobody reacts, so all national delegations agree to his interpretation of the statutes).

Blank sheets are handed out to all delegations. In answer to the proposal for the new Portuguese Presidency team, the delegations are requested to write down 'yes' or 'no' on the sheet (one per delegation).

Vice-presidents Buss and Fabian will count the votes.

After the voting Vice-president STEIN announces the result of the vote:

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| 'Yes' | : 6 votes |
| 'No' | : 11 votes |
| Abstentions | : 1 |

Thus, the Portuguese proposal for the new Presidency team is rejected.

Dr. CHAPMAN believes the Plenum should now proceed very carefully. The Portuguese delegation now has to decide if it wants to maintain the Presidency by proposing another team. So far, they have not expressed their views on this subject.

Vice-president STEIN agrees and suggests the Portuguese delegation should discuss this during the coffee break.

COFFEE BREAK

After the break, Dr. MENDES LEAL takes the floor and thanks everybody for their support and good wishes and for the six votes in favour of the Portuguese proposal, which is not at all bad for a team that came 'out of the blue'.

Dr. GOMES then states that the Portuguese delegation has decided to withdraw from the UEMO Presidency and will not introduce another team. He honestly hopes that the newly elected team will do a good job. The Portuguese delegation will remain a loyal member, of course.

Vice-President STEIN believes it a good thing to retain a good team spirit, even though the statutes sometimes prevent this. Dr. CHAPMAN thanks Portugal for its gracious move; it is an example of good team spirit. He thanks the delegation for preventing a potentially dangerous situation.

After the statement of Vice-president STEIN that UEMO still requires a new Presidency, Dr. O'CONNOR takes the floor and nominates Italy.

Dr. van VELZEN says to be pleased that Italy shares the Dutch view on a strong UEMO and a good lobby in Brussels. It is in the interest of all the GPs in Europe that UEMO is led by a professional team. Italy and the Netherlands both desire a strong and competent UEMO management. He goes on to say that the Dutch delegation supports the Italian candidacy.

Asked by some delegates if there will be elections within the Italian national Association with results just as disastrous for the UEMO as witnessed in Portugal, Dr. CRECELLI replies that this will not happen in Italy: "we are a stable and GP-oriented medical organisation!!"

Furthermore he refers to the handout, titled: "The Italian Delegation to UEMO" (Annex 6).

The Italian Presidency team, to be confirmed by the Plenum will consist of: Dr. Claudio Crecelli, Dr. Giovanni Bezzi, Dr. Lamberto Pressato and Dra. Emanuela Lerda. Head of secretariat will be Ms. Carla Archini.

Dr. GÁRZON (SP) says to support the Italian candidacy and adds that this is in fact the third time that Italy is a candidate.

Vice-president STEIN then determines that there are no other competing candidates, after which the Plenum by applause acknowledges that Italy will hold the Presidency of the UEMO for the remainder of 1999, and for the years 2000, 2001 and 2002. By doing so, the Plenum also confirms the appointments by the Italian Association of Doctors and Dentists for the posts in the UEMO Presidency.

Newly elected UEMO President Claudio CRECELLI then delivers his acceptance speech. He has been in and around the UEMO for 15 years, during which period he saw the European dimension develop. The UEMO has to adjust itself to this situation. To begin with, he plans to change small things that make the difference. The new Presidency will carry out the necessary reorganisations with intelligence. Dr. Crecelli wants: to rethink the UEMO goals and means, he wants to amend the statutes and draw up an agenda that is directed at the future. He thanks the four Vice-presidents and looks forward to co-operating with each of them. With the Heads of Delegation he wants to discuss the reorganisation of the UEMO meetings. He also wants to confer on the next meeting, the venue place, the structure of the meeting and the way in which each delegation can make a contribution to the UEMO. Finally, he wants to discuss the Dutch proposals as set out in their policy paper.

Former UEMO President de SOUSA thanks the Portuguese delegation and says he is confident that they will integrate quickly. He thanks all fellow delegates and the (short-lived) Secretariat, including Siv, his wife. He goes on to congratulate Italy and wishes Claudio Crecelli the best of luck in his new capacity.

F. DISCUSSIONS ON THE JUNE 1999 PLENUM MEETING

President CRECELLI points out that the June meeting in Oporto will take place. It will not be possible to change the venue place to somewhere in Italy at such short notice. He kindly asks the Portuguese delegation to proceed with the organisation of this meeting, if not in Oporto, perhaps in Lisbon.

At this meeting, Dr. CHAPMAN wants to discuss the proposals of the Dutch delegation and the amendment of the statutes to deal with the problems the Plenum has had to face now.

Dr. BRETTENTHALER would like to use the June meeting to do some brainstorming on the policy programme for the next few years. Furthermore, he strongly advises to make use of the services of the Comité Permanent (CP), of which he is now, Vice-president. We should follow the example of the new working method within the CP. Jobs are divided between member organisations, which has turned out to be a very efficient way of working. Things are going very well with the CP right now, with an active Secretariat to keep things going. The UEMO should develop a new relation with the rejuvenated CP and discuss its relation with the CP. In doing so, however, we must only watch our own interests. We should prevent the coming about (Werdegang) of the farmers in Europe. We should not become invisibly present. Again he pleads for a good programme discussion in June.

Dr. van VELZEN agrees with his Austrian colleague that a serious policy discussion should take place at this meeting, and that a timetable should be drawn up as well. He suggests that the Italian Presidency drafts a policy paper based on the recent Italian and Dutch policy statements.

President CRECELLI agrees and will do some hard thinking on the UEMO policy. We must be functional and practical at the same time. Also we will have to be present in Brussels and have interviews with the stakeholders there.

Dr. DAMBROWSKI (G) suggests having a discussion on the draft budget for 2000 as well. Is it possible to have a draft budget on the table in June? Another thing is that UEMO member countries may make an appeal to the UEMO to solve problems in their country.

Vice-president STEIN believes that one of the problems of doing business in Brussels is that the European Committee believes it to be easier to do business with people who do not belong to the group at stake. Another important matter is that the meeting with the European Society of Family Medicine, postponed because of the present crisis, will take place in the near future.

Asked by Vice-president BUSS about the state of affairs in the lobbying process in Brussels, Niek van 't GRUNEWOLD (NL) points out that the subject of the proposed revision of Directive 93/16 (including the amendments), accepted by the European Parliament, is now with the working party for Economic Affairs, manned by officials from the EU member countries. They will draft an advice for the Council of Ministers. The working party was scheduled to meet in April. After receiving their report the Council will take a decision. The proposals are believed to be dealt with by the European Parliament again in the autumn of 1999, i.e. after the June elections for a new European Parliament.

Dr. CHAPMAN then reports on the recent meeting in Brussels of the Advisory Committee on Medical Training (ACMT). There have been discussions on the recommendations from the UEMO report on specific training. Of the ten recommendations the European Commission and the Council (concerning the part-time specific training percentage) adopted only one. So in a way there is progress in this respect. European GPs should do everything to keep the pressure on the Commission to adopt the remaining 9 recommendations after all. This should be achieved by using every means available such as writing and interviewing key persons. Help from the UEMO in this respect is very welcome.

Vice-president Christina FABIAN then demands attention for the fact that new chairpersons and rapporteurs are required for the nine working groups, as some functions have become vacant. This is a good time to tackle the problems:

- Working Group, Chairperson, Rapporteur
- Continuous Medical Education: Jan Bergen (NL), Peter Mortensen (DK)
- Specific Training: Romain Stein (L), Etienne Lemaire (B)
- Quality Assurance: Mateja Bulc (SLOV)?
- Informatics: Otto Pjeta (A), John Chisholm UK)?
- Equal Opportunities: Christina Fabian (SW), Roger Chapman (UK)
- Prevention: Finland, Sweden
- General Medical Services: Chistina Fabian (SW), Ireland
- Deprived Areas: Willy Buss (S), Paul Rasch (NL)

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!ALL DELEGATIONS ARE REQUESTED TO SEND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE AGENDAS OF THE WORKING GROUPS TO THE NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENCY IN TIME!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

G. PLANNED MEETINGS

President CRECELLI then points out to the delegates that all messages concerning the reservations for the Plenum meeting on 10 and 11 June 1999 in Oporto/Lisbon may be sent by traditional post or by e-mail.

The autumn meeting on 29 and 30 October 1999 will take place in the Slovenian city of Portoroz (Istria), about 30 kilometres east of Trieste.

The meeting was concluded at 17.45 hours.