



GENERAL INFORMATION

FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC

**14-18 September 1998
Manila, Philippines**

April 1998

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I. WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC

1. Date and place of the session

The forty-ninth session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for the Western Pacific will be held in Manila, Philippines, from 14 to 18 September 1998.

The session will open at 9 a.m. on 14 September 1998 at the Conference Hall of the WHO Regional Office building, situated on United Nations Avenue, corner Taft Avenue, Ermita, Manila. The plenary meetings will also be held at the same venue.

Working^{*} hours for the session are tentatively set from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., with a fifteen-minute coffee/tea break in each period.

2. Languages of the Regional Committee

The official languages of the Regional Committee are Chinese, English and French; English and French are the working languages. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided between the three official languages.

II. WHO REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC AND ITS SERVICES

1. The Regional Office

The WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO) is situated on United Nations Avenue, corner Taft Avenue, Ermita, Manila.

Telephone, facsimile and E-mail facilities are available in the Regional Office during office hours. Postage stamps and phone cards can also be bought in the Office.

The postal address of the Regional Office is:

WHO/WPRO
P.O. Box 2932
1000 Manila
Philippines

Telephone: (632) 528 80 01 to 49
(632) 528 99 32

Facsimile: (632) 521 1036
(632) 526 0279
(632) 526 0362
(632) 761 0639

Please note that smoking is not allowed in the WHO premises nor in any official Regional Committee function.

2. Travel and transport arrangements

Representatives will be provided with transportation by WHO to and from Manila International Airport (Ninoy Aquino International Airport).

The staff of the WHO official travel agent, Rajah Travel Corporation, on the WHO premises will supply information on travel and make travel arrangements. Visitors are requested to reconfirm their return journey as soon as possible after their arrival, and not later than 72 hours before the scheduled departure.

3. Hotel accommodation

In response to requests, WHO will reserve rooms for visitors at good hotels close to the Regional Office.

From the Regional Office, the Holiday Inn Manila Pavilion (formerly Manila Pavilion) is 3 minutes' walk, the Manila Hotel is about 20 minutes' walk or 5-10 minutes by car depending on the traffic situation, and the Bayview Park Hotel is 10 minutes' walk or 5 minutes by car from the Regional Office. The Manila Hotel and Bayview Park will provide complimentary two-way transport. WHO staff and visitors are normally given special rates at these hotels, reflected in the request for accommodation form supplied (Form B).

Please note that as some hotels use a different exchange rate if payment is made in local currency (to the disadvantage of the traveller), it is recommended that payments be made in US\$ traveller's cheques.

4. Banks

The Rajah Travel Corporation in the WHO building will assist in encashment of traveller's cheques at preferential rates. The Far East Bank and Trust Company is a short walking distance from the WHO premises.

The monetary unit of the Philippines is the peso. The currency consists of paper notes in denominations of P1000, P500, P100, P50, P20 and P10. The coins consist of P5, P1 and 50, 25, 10, and 5 centavo pieces.

The exchange rate fluctuates; as at April 1998, it was approximately PHP37.00 to US\$1.

5. Medical service

A nurse is on duty to give first aid, prescribed injections and simple treatment in the infirmary of the Regional Office, Room 1219, Telephone 9226 or 9227, from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In addition, a WHO doctor is on duty every Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Hospitals in very close proximity to the Regional Office are the following:

Manila Doctors Hospital

667 United Nations Avenue
Manila
Telephone 524-30-11

Medical Centre Manila

General Luna Street
Manila
Telephone 523-8131

6. Cafeteria

The WHO Cafeteria serves breakfast and lunch, as well as coffee, tea and soft drinks, sandwiches, cakes, snacks and hot meals at reasonable prices. It is open from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

7. Library

The WHO Library is situated on the second floor of Building 2 of the Regional Office and is open during office hours, Mondays to Fridays.

III. INFORMATION ON THE PHILIPPINES AND MANILA

1. Entry requirements

Representatives and other participants are required to have a passport valid for at least six (6) months and an entry visa (if required) for the Philippines.

Nationals of countries represented in the Regional Committee, with the exception of those listed below, are allowed to enter the Philippines without visas for a stay not exceeding twenty-one (21) days, provided they hold valid tickets for their return journey to port of origin or next port of destination.

Nationals of the following countries in the Region are required to secure entry visas to the Philippines:

Cambodia

China, People's Republic of

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Regular passport holders only; diplomatic and official passport holders do not need entry visas.

Tonga

Viet Nam

Regular and official passport holders only: diplomatic passport holders do not need entry visas.

The following nationals are allowed to enter the Philippines without a visa for a stay not exceeding seven (7) days:

- (1) Holders of Hong Kong-British, British National Overseas or Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) passports;
- (2) Holders of Portuguese passports issued in Macao.

Representatives and other participants requiring entry visas should write as early as possible to the Administrative Services Officer, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, giving information regarding the traveller's name, date of birth, passport number, date and place of issue and validity date, so that prior arrangements for visa issuance can be made with the Philippine Government authorities.

2. Health regulations

Yellow fever vaccination is needed for visitors arriving from infected areas, except children under one year of age, who may be subject to isolation if this is determined to be necessary.

3. Customs

Visitors may bring in the following items free of duty: 2 bottles of alcoholic beverages and a small quantity of perfume for personal use.

4. Climate and clothing

The climate is tropical with temperatures ranging from 21°C to 38°C (70°F-100°F). The rainy season extends from mid-May to mid-November, when it is advisable to have a light raincoat or umbrella. Even during the rainy season, however, there are dry spells. The humidity is high (65%-90%) all year round.

Light clothing is recommended. Offices, hotels and shops are fully air-conditioned and visitors may sometimes feel the need for a light jacket or equivalent. **However, for representatives attending the session, a business suit or equivalent attire is recommended.**

5. Electricity

The power supply in Manila is 220V, and in most hotels 110V is available as well. The frequency of electrical current is 60 Hz.

6. Public transportation

Manila's public transportation system consists of buses, taxis, "jeepneys" and the light railway transit (LRT).

All taxis have meters and rates are reasonable. Most taxi drivers understand and speak English.

There are several car hire companies operating in the city.

For security reasons, when possible, request the hotel guards to arrange for your transport by taxi.

7. Shopping and entertainment

In the vicinity of the Regional Office is the Ermita "tourist belt" (Mabini and Del Pilar Streets), with many local handicraft and antique shops. Robinson's Place, a shopping mall within walking distance of the Regional Office, has a large variety of shops, boutiques, gift shops, restaurants and specialty stores.

Roxas Boulevard is well known for its large number of restaurants and night clubs. Many large hotels as well as the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Folk Arts Theatre and the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) are located on Roxas Boulevard.

There are modern shopping centres in Makati and Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, which are located about 30 to 45 minutes by car or taxi from the Regional Office. These commercial centres have a large number of restaurants, modern air-conditioned cinemas, food and department stores and assorted outlets for electrical equipment and

appliances, furniture, clothing, pharmaceuticals, jewellery, books, etc. The stores are generally open from 10 a.m. to 7 or 8 p.m.

8. Credit cards

International credit cards are accepted by the majority of tourist establishments.

9. Tipping

A 10% service charge and 10.75% prevailing government tax are added to most hotel bills. Accommodation rates quoted by the hotels used by WHO are net; restaurant bills generally include approximately 11% sales tax on food and 13% sales tax on beverages. Additional tipping is optional. Bellboys or porters should be tipped anything from P10 to P30 depending on how much luggage you have.

10. Sightseeing

Points of interest in Manila are:

- (1) Intramuros, the site of the ancient city of Manila, with the ruins of Fort Santiago, historic San Agustin Church and Manila Cathedral.
- (2) Rizal Park, Manila's colourful garden and memorial to Dr Jose Rizal, the Philippine national hero.

- (3) Historic Malacañang Palace by the Pasig River, former official residence of Spanish and American Governors-General, which is now used as the Office of the President of the Philippines. Malacañang Park in the Palace grounds, is open to the public.
- (4) The Cultural Center of the Philippines, the Philippine International Convention Center, the Coconut Palace and the Folk Arts Theatre on Roxas Boulevard.
- (5) The Ayala Museum in Makati and the Metropolitan Museum on Roxas Boulevard, depicting Philippine history, art and culture.

There are many interesting places outside the city:

- (1) The growing resort of Tagaytay City, perched on a ridge overlooking Lake Taal and Taal Volcano is about 90 minutes drive south of Manila by car.
- (2) The famous bamboo organ in St. Joseph's Church in Las Piñas. A trip to Las Piñas can be combined with a visit to Tagaytay.
- (3) Corregidor, an island at the entrance to Manila Bay, famous battlefield of the Second World War, now a monument.

The Rajah Travel Corporation office (Room 1102 of the Regional Office) may be consulted for information on tour schedules and services. Most hotels also provide such information.

11. Security

As in all large cities, it is essential to observe reasonable security precautions and guard against the danger of falling victim to any of the fraudulent practices to which tourists may be exposed - through, for example, spurious requests for financial assistance, offers of goods and services, exchange of foreign currency, etc.

Thus, prudence and sound judgement should be exercised at all times, whether in the hotel, on the street, in a taxi or simply telephoning.

It is also recommended that you obtain a security update from the travel section prior to undertaking any travel outside Metro Manila.

In case of any emergency, the Regional Office's 24-hour telephone number is (632) 528-8001.