President-Elect L.D. Pickwell of the International Optometric and Optical League (Iool) expressed concern in his report to the May 1980 Delegates meeting in Japan that the World Health Organization (WHO) does not understand the League’s purpose in the promotion of optometry.

In this report he noted that the Iool welcomes an invitation to truly become involved in WHO sponsored eyecare schemes, but that despite Iool presentations and correspondences, the WHO still did not appear to recognize the role of optometry. “They recognized opticians and ophthalmologists but not optometrists.” As a result, he said, the first priority of the League must be to make certain that WHO understands that optometry is the primary source of eyecare in all countries and that the Iool is an optometric organization.

He suggested that all members and delegates who have contact with WHO should circulate the following statement to explain the League’s position and to emphasize that any scheme for eyecare which did not include optometry would invite criticism.

“The Iool policy is that optometric service is essential to full eyecare for the public of all countries. Without optometry, development of full eyecare in underdeveloped countries would be very much slower and never reach the best possible in the public interest. Where optometry is fully developed, early detection of disease and prompt and proper prescribing of optical appliances is very widely available. Optometric examination is an appropriate approach to the provision of optical aids. The dispensing service is immediately available from the optometrist. This has proved to be the most economic way of providing optical aids and screening for eye disease and eye signs of general disease.”

Pickwell stated that the status of the Iool’s recognition by the WHO will be reviewed at the next General Meeting of Delegates and a further course of action determined at that time.