28 January 2013 GENEVA -- Dr **Hiroshi Nakajima**, former Director-General of the **World Health Organization**
,
died Saturday
,
26 January
, in Poitiers, France, after a short illness. He was 84.

Following a career of research in neuropharmacology, Dr Nakajima joined WHO in 1974, where he helped develop the concept of essential medicines. He served as Director of the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific from 1978 to 1988, and as the Organization's fourth Director-General, from 1988 to 1998.

Many of WHO's most successful current programmes owe a debt to his work during those years. Some programmes connected to his leadership include:

- DOTS (directly-observed treatment, short course), the strategy for TB care and control that WHO started promoting in 1995;
- the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness Initiative;
- the expansion of the global programme for childhood immunization.

”For all of these initiatives, the impact on people's health mattered most to him," said Dr Margaret Chan as she announced the news to WHO's Executive Board meeting currently underway in Geneva. "One of Dr Nakajima's greatest passions was to see polio defeated. We are doing so now, for many good reasons. Let these efforts also be a tribute to his memory."

His contribution to public health was commemorated by the Member States, civil society, staff and others attending the Executive Board with a minute of silence. Nakajima is survived by his wife, Martha Nakajima, and two sons.