138th session **EB138.R5**

Agenda item 7.2 **30 January 2016**

Strengthening essential public health functions in support of the achievement of universal health coverage

The Executive Board,

Having considered the report on health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1]

RECOMMENDS to the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly,

Noting the importance of public health functions as the most cost-effective, comprehensive and sustainable ways to enhance the health of populations and individuals and to reduce the burden of disease;

Recognizing also the need to strengthen public health governance, institutional and technical capacities in countries in order to contribute effectively to population health and protect people from the social and economic consequences of ill-health in a globalized world;

Acknowledging that Goal 3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) with its 13 health targets, together with the multiple other health-related targets and goals in the 2030 Agenda, will require strong intersectoral action in order to be fully implemented;

Reaffirming the commitment made in United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", especially target 3.8 (Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all) which will contribute to ending poverty and fighting inequality and injustice;

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/81 (2012) on global health and foreign policy, acknowledging that universal health coverage implies that all people have access, without discrimination, to nationally determined sets of the needed promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative basic health services and essential, safe, affordable, effective and quality medicines, while ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the users to financial hardship, with a special emphasis on the poorest and marginalized

[1] Document EB138/14.

segments of populations in accordance with the principle of social inclusion, in order to enhance their ability to realize their right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health;

Further recalling that United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/81 (2012) also recognizes that effective and financially sustainable implementation of universal health coverage is based on a resilient and responsive health system that provides comprehensive primary health care services, with extensive geographical coverage, including in remote and rural areas, and with a special emphasis on access to populations most in need, and that has an adequate skilled, well-trained and motivated workforce, as well as capacities for broad public health measures, health protection and addressing determinants of health through policies across sectors, including promoting the health literacy of the population;

Recalling also resolution WHA62.12 (2009) on primary health care, including health system strengthening, which urges Member States to put people at the centre of health care by adopting, as appropriate, delivery models focused on local and district levels that provide comprehensive primary health care services including health promotion, disease prevention, curative and palliative care, and noting the importance of equitable and affordable access to services;

Further recalling resolution WHA64.9 (2011) on sustainable health financing structures and universal coverage, which recognizes that effective health systems delivering comprehensive health services, including preventive services, are of utmost importance for health, economic development and well-being and that these systems need to be based on equitable and sustainable financing;

Recalling also United Nations General Assembly resolution 68/300 (2013), the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the comprehensive review and assessment of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, which recognizes, inter alia, that insufficient progress in the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases undermines social and economic development throughout the world, and which commits to the implementation of effective multisectoral public policies to promote health, and to strengthen and orient health systems to address prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and underlying social determinants through people-centred primary health care and universal health coverage throughout the life cycle;

Recalling regional resolutions EUR/RC61/R2 (2011) on strengthening public health capacities and services in Europe: a framework for action, CD42.R14 (2000) on essential public health functions and CD53.R14 on Strategy for Universal access to Health and Universal Health Coverage, WPR/RC53.R7 on essential public health functions, as well as the briefing to the sixty-second session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean on assessing essential public health functions in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, encouraging Member States to strengthen essential public health functions as a basis for improving public health practice and as a means of achieving resilient health systems moving towards universal health coverage;

Recognizing that essential public health functions are the responsibility of Member States and support the achievement of the objectives of universal health coverage, facilitate the financial feasibility thereof by reducing health risks and threats, the burden of noncommunicable and communicable diseases and contribute to the achievement of other health related sustainable development goals and targets;

Noting that essential public health functions that span across multiple non-health sectors and address, among other things, economic, environmental and social determinants of health, benefit the health of the entire population and could be undersupplied without government intervention;

Recognizing that successful implementation of essential public health functions requires strengthening of governance and public health capacities, which may include, inter alia, building the knowledge and evidence base for policy options and strategies; ensuring sustainable and adequate resources, agency support and skilled and dedicated staff; assessing health and health-related gender impacts of different policy options; understanding the political agendas of other sectors and creating intersectoral platforms for dialogue and addressing challenges, including with social participation; evaluating the effectiveness of intersectoral work and integrated policy-making and working with other sectors of government to advance health and well-being;

Recalling resolution WHA58.3 (2005), encouraging Member States to strengthen and maintain public health capacities to detect, report, assess and respond to public health emergencies and public health risks, as part of countries' obligations to fully implement the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005); and resolution EBSS3.R1 (2015) of the Special Session of the Executive Board on Ebola, which recognized the importance of addressing long-term systemic gaps in capacity to prevent and detect health threats and to respond to them effectively with the aim to improve health security at national, regional and global levels, and noting that this equally requires intersectoral action;

Underscoring the integrated, cross-cutting nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, which call for multisectoral action and provide new legitimacy for addressing wider determinants of health,

1. URGES Member States:[1]

(1) to show leadership and ownership in establishing effective health governance by national and subnational health authorities including cross-sectoral health policies and integrated strategies aiming to improve population health to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 3.8 on universal health coverage and other health related Sustainable Development Goals, in accordance with nationally set priorities, accelerating their achievement, as appropriate, through establishing and enhancing monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms and capacities;

(2) to enhance international cooperation to achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all;

(3) to invest adequate sustainable resources for health system strengthening towards universal health coverage, including needs-based allocation among socioeconomic groups in favour of the most vulnerable and deprived populations within national contexts in order to reduce burden of disease, financial risks, inequality and injustice;

(4) to enhance institutional and operational capacity and infrastructure for public health, including scientific and operational competence of public health institutions, as

[1] And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

appropriate to national circumstances, as well as a cross-sectoral infrastructure for delivering essential public health functions, including the capacity to address existing and emerging health threats and risks;

(5) to invest into the education, recruitment and retention of a fit-for-purpose and responsive public health workforce that is effectively and equitably deployed to contribute to effective and efficient delivery of essential public health functions, based on population needs;

(6) to ensure coordination, collaboration, communication and synergies across sectors, programmes and, as appropriate, other relevant stakeholders, with a view to improving health, protecting people from the financial risk of ill-health, and promoting a comprehensive approach to public health in support of the achievement of universal health coverage throughout the life cycle;

(7) to foster approaches that systematically tackle social, environmental and economic determinants of health and health inequity, taking into account gender impacts;

(8) to monitor, evaluate, analyse and improve health outcomes, including through the establishment of comprehensive and effective civil registration and vital statistics systems and effective delivery of essential public health functions, equitable access to quality health care services, and the level of financial risk protection;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to develop and disseminate technical guidance on the application of essential public health functions, taking into account WHO regional definitions, in the strengthening of health systems and for the achievement of universal health coverage;

(2) to facilitate international cooperation and to continue and enhance support to Member States upon request in their efforts to build the necessary institutional administrative and scientific capacity, providing technical support in relation to essential public health functions, for health systems strengthening, including to prevent, detect, assess and respond to public health events, and integrated and multisectoral approaches towards universal health coverage; and to develop facilitating tools in this regard;

(3) to take the leading role, facilitate international cooperation and foster coordination in global health at all levels, particularly in relation to health system strengthening, including essential public health functions, supportive to the achievement of the health related sustainable development goals and targets;

(4) to report to the Health Assembly on the implementation of this resolution as a contribution to the achievement of the health-related targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Thirteenth meeting, 30 January 2016
EB138/SR/13

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