

64th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, Islamabad, Pakistan, 9–12 October 2017

Summary report by the Chairman (Dr Saira Afzal Tarar, Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Pakistan)

PART 1: TOPICS FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSION

The following item was not included on the agenda: global vector control response.

Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)

The Committee was informed about the development of a draft five-year global strategic plan to improve public health preparedness and response, which was requested by the 70th World Health Assembly for submission to the 142nd Executive Board. The Committee considered the document developed for consultation with Member States during regional committees. It expressed support for development of the draft five-year global strategic plan under the guiding principles and pillars proposed by the Secretariat.

Towards WHO's 13th General Programme of Work 2019–2023 “Keep the World Safe, Improve Health, Serve the Vulnerable”

The Committee was informed about the proposed accelerated timeline and process for development of a draft Thirteenth General Programme of Work, which will provide WHO's strategic vision for 2019–2023. Representatives noted the need to ensure complementarity between the regional roadmap and the GPW. They supported the focus placed on evidence, outcomes and impact, and highlighted the importance of a quality management approach, performance measurement and progress monitoring. Representatives emphasized the need to strengthen the capacity of countries and of WHO's regional and country offices, particularly with regard to multisectoral action. They also emphasized the need to include strategic positioning of WHO in relation to the SDGs and other United Nations partners, and to include Health-in-all-Policies as a key principle to achievement of the SDGs and implementation of universal health coverage. The Committee supported the initiative for an accelerated process for finalization of a draft Thirteenth General Programme of Work and the timeline for its development.

PART 2: TOPICS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Regional framework for action on cancer prevention and control

The Committee discussed a draft regional framework for cancer prevention and control which was aimed at guiding Member States in decision-making on policy options and priority interventions in this area. Representatives emphasized the need for countries to focus more on cancer prevention and on addressing risk factors. They highlighted the importance of further research, greater advocacy for palliative care programmes and the establishment of cancer registries all Member States. They recommended the inclusion of childhood cancers within the scope of the framework, as well as the “best buys” at the primary health care level, and of clear indicators of good governance in cancer prevention and control. The Committee endorsed the regional framework for action on cancer prevention and control and urged Member States *inter alia* to integrate and scale up national cancer

prevention policies and programmes and to prioritize early detection strategies for the most common cancers.¹

Climate change and health: a framework for action

The Committee discussed a proposed framework for action aimed at guiding the health sector response to climate change in Member States and building the resilience of health systems in the Region to withstand the impacts of climate change on health. Representatives highlighted the unique environmental diversity found across the Region and the resulting sensitivity to climate change in many countries. More attention was needed to promote and build on the commitments of the Marrakech Ministerial Declaration on Health, Environment and Climate Change adopted by the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2016. Input from WHO and other stakeholders was particularly sought to develop comprehensive mitigation and adaptation strategies to combat health degradation due to climate change. Representatives identified the need for integrating climate change and public health into academic curricula; regular and reliable sources of environmental data; intercountry collaboration on mitigation measures; and partnerships with government and civil society for surveillance and detection of those areas particularly vulnerable to climate change. The Committee endorsed the framework for action on climate change and health and called on Member States *inter alia* to designate national focal points to coordinate the development of the public health response to climate change.²

Operationalization of the adolescent health component of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health

The Committee discussed adolescent health and development in the context of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents: Guidance to Support Country Implementation. Representatives agreed that the implementation guidance provided a range of comprehensive measures for countries to improve adolescent health and respond more effectively to adolescents' needs. They cited the need for more accurate data, particularly on the causes of adolescent deaths. The Committee urged Member States to develop or update national action plans on adolescent health using the implementation guidance and requested WHO to provide support in this regard.³

Antimicrobial resistance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The Committee discussed the current status of the response to antimicrobial resistance in countries and noted the particular vulnerability of the Region due to complex emergencies, over prescribing and weak surveillance. Representatives highlighted the need for coordinated action across sectors to ensure a comprehensive response at national level. The role of the private health sector was emphasized. Representatives noted a lack of adequate surveillance data and proposed the establishment of a regional network for laboratory surveillance. The Committee urged Member States *inter alia* to develop national action plans for antimicrobial resistance and to establish a multisectoral high-level coordination mechanism to oversee the development and implementation of such plans. It requested WHO support for establishing infection control programmes, strengthening laboratory surveillance and developing monitoring systems.⁴

¹ EM/RC64/R.2

² EM/RC64/R.3

³ EM/RC64/R.4

⁴ EM/RC64/R.5