

STATEMENT FOR THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, Geneva, 21–30 May 2022

Agenda items: 12

Documents: A76/5

Title: Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016–2030) to be delivered by the Member State

Dear Chairperson, Your Excellencies, Director-General,

I take the floor on behalf of the member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

We welcome the report on resolution WHA69.2 on committing to implementation of the Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016–2030). This landmark strategy places women, children and adolescents at the heart of the international development agenda, setting out a vision for ensuring that no one is left behind.

Besides highlighting the progress made in improving the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents worldwide since the launch of the strategy, the report also acknowledges the significant challenges that remain, in particular following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, the UN Secretary-General issued a call for a decade of action to address socioeconomic inequities, including those relating to health, and to accelerate efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it harder not only to improve the health of women, children and adolescents, but also to sustain the progress made during the pre-COVID-19 era. The pandemic has also drained already limited health resources in low- and middle-income countries, with grave implications for the health of women, children and adolescents.

Although most countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region have shown progress towards the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals that relate to women’s and children’s health, a number of countries still endure unacceptably high mortalities, morbidities and health inequities among certain population groups and settings, such as displaced populations, refugees, women with disabilities and older women.

Madame chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Director-General’s recent announcement that COVID-19 no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, ushers in new opportunities to refocus and re-prioritize. This is a moment for all countries and international development partners, under the

leadership of WHO, to join hands to accelerate progress towards achieving the health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We are now halfway to the deadline for these goals. Several supportive global and regional partnerships and initiatives exist to accelerate progress at country level. We are pleased to note the recent launch of the first ever joint report on the Every Newborn action plan to prevent newborn deaths and stillbirths and the initiative on ending preventable maternal mortality led by WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Population Fund. We also call for a focus on adolescents in the reporting on progress at this year's Sustainable Development Goals Summit and to ensure that political and financial commitments are made at the 2023 Global Forum for Adolescents.

Now is the time to redouble our efforts to align and synergize all relevant initiatives. Now is the time for all countries to prioritize investment in women's, children's and adolescents' health and well-being, with a focus on universal health coverage and primary health care, addressing inequities and the social determinants of health, and ensuring multisectoral action.

In view of the stagnation of maternal mortality decline even before the Covid-19 pandemic and plateauing of child mortality reduction particularly in countries with fragile health systems, a World Health Assembly resolution in May 2024, guiding countries on actions to accelerate towards the SDG maternal and child health targets will be needed.

Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

The countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region is calling upon all other member states to join our call for a resolution on this important health issue which we believe will accelerate progress towards the universal health goals (UHC), a major component of the SDGs which all countries have committed.

We call upon the Director-General to scale-up WHO support to all countries in these important areas, while giving priority to countries that are not yet on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, to initiatives aimed at accelerating the reduction in maternal, newborn and child mortality, and to countries in humanitarian emergencies.

Thank you