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The Permanent Delegation of the Cooperation Council for Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the Director-General of the World Health Organization and has the honor to attach a letter addressed to **Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, the Director-General of the WHO, from **H.E Mr. Abdulla Abdullatif Abdulla**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva and Chair of the GCC Council of Ambassadors in Geneva, on behalf of the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, transmitting an explanatory memorandum proposing the inclusion of an additional item on the provisional agenda of the 79<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly (18 -23 May 2026).

The Permanent Delegation of the Cooperation Council for Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the Director-General of the World Health Organization, the assurance of its highest consideration.



**Office of the Director-General  
World Health Organization – WHO  
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Number: 100/46

Date: 07 May 2026

**Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**

Director-General, World Health Organization

**Excellency,**

On behalf of the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I have the honour to write to you in connection with the provisional agenda of the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly, scheduled to take place from 18 to 23 May 2026.

I have the honour to transmit herewith an explanatory memorandum proposing the inclusion of an additional item on the provisional agenda of the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly, entitled **“Public health implications of the unprovoked attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran on civilians and essential civilian infrastructure in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan.”**

In view of the approaching opening of the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly, we would be grateful if you would kindly request the Secretariat of the World Health Organization to take the necessary steps, as a matter of urgency and in accordance with the applicable Rules of Procedure, to include the proposed item on the provisional agenda of the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

**Abdulla Abdullatif ABDULLA**

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent  
Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United  
Nations Office and other international organizations in  
Geneva

Chair of the GCC Council of Ambassadors in Geneva

**Geneva, 7 May 2026**

## **Explanatory memorandum for the inclusion of an item on the provisional agenda of the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly**

**Member States submitting the proposed item:** The Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

**Title of the proposed item:** Public health implications of the unprovoked attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran on civilians and essential civilian infrastructure in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan

Recent attacks by the Islamic Republic of Iran against civilians and essential civilian infrastructure in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan **have raised serious public health concerns, with civilian deaths and injuries, including among children.** The consequences of these attacks for civilians' fundamental rights have been significant, particularly with regard to the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including mental health and social well-being.

The attacks have also affected infrastructure essential to health, including water desalination systems, energy facilities, ports, airports, transport and logistics networks, and health-care services, underscoring the extent to which the functioning of health systems depends on the continuous and reliable operation of these systems.

Disruptions to such infrastructure have demonstrated the potential to cause immediate and cascading implications for public health. These include interruptions to life-saving health services, delays in the delivery of essential medical supplies, the suspension or delay of surgical procedures, and reduced access to safe drinking water, **particularly given the high dependence of several Arab Gulf countries on desalination as a primary source of drinking water supply, reaching up to 90 per cent in some cases.** They may also affect broader social and environmental determinants of health, including continuity of essential services, climate-related health risks, and air pollution and related impacts on population health arising from attacks on oil and energy-related infrastructure.

In addition, attacks affecting ports, airspace and transport routes also have demonstrated the potential to disrupt cross-border cooperation in health programmes, including regional cooperation arrangements for organ transplantation, with implications for access to specialized life-saving health services.

**As a critical lifeline for the Arab Gulf countries, the Strait of Hormuz is essential for the transport of essential goods, energy supplies and health commodities;** disruptions to maritime navigation through the Strait may therefore have implications for the continuity of health services in the concerned Member States.

In addition to their direct impact, such disruptions carry broader regional and global implications. Given the central role of the Arab Gulf region in global energy flows and trade routes, including maritime trade through the Strait of Hormuz, disruptions may affect global health supply chains and the availability, accessibility and affordability of medicines, vaccines and other essential health commodities.

Furthermore, **given that the Arab Gulf region hosts the WHO Hub for Global Health Emergencies Logistics in Dubai**, disruptions to airspace and transport routes may affect the timely delivery of health assistance to countries in conflict or in need. Taken together, these dynamics may place additional strain on health systems globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

While WHO has an established mandate in areas such as health system resilience, emergency preparedness and response, and access to essential health services, the current context highlights the need for more focused consideration of the public health implications of disruptions to infrastructure essential to health, particularly **where such disruptions arise from unlawful attacks and have wider-than-regional health implications**. Addressing these risks is consistent with WHO's role as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work and with its efforts to strengthen preparedness and resilience.

The proposed item would provide an opportunity for Member States to examine these public health implications and identify practical approaches to mitigate their impact on health and well-being, **continuity of health services**, health system resilience and global health supply chains, while strengthening coordination across relevant sectors.

This reflects the item's relevance to protecting civilian lives, safeguarding population health and well-being, strengthening health emergency resilience and ensuring continuity of essential health services. The item also addresses a global public-health issue and a significant public-health burden, while contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals and building on existing WHO work. **The proposed item is closely aligned with WHO's General Programme of Work, particularly under the "Protect health" pillar, and, in this regard, the submitting Member States respectfully request that it be referred to Committee A for consideration.**

Given the urgency and public health significance of this issue, it is proposed that this item be included on the agenda of the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly to enable a focused and substantive discussion, support coordinated action by Member States, and inform consideration of the longer-term consequences for health systems and population health.