

**PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING**

**WHO headquarters, Geneva**  
**Tuesday, 23 January 2024, scheduled at 09:00**

**Chair: Dr H.M. AL KUWARI (Qatar)**

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### THIRD MEETING

Tuesday, 23 January 2024, at 09:15

Chair: Dr H.M. AL KUWARI (Qatar)

**1. REPORT OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEES TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD:** Item 3 of the agenda (document EB154/3)

The representative of SLOVAKIA commended WHO's efforts to enhance alignment at the regional and global levels. She expressed appreciation for the governance review in the European Region and its follow-up; and commended progress made towards participatory governance and improved transparency, inclusiveness and predictability in selection processes. She recognized the challenge of misinformation in the context of the negotiations on the pandemic agreement and welcomed efforts to combat it. She supported the request by the Regional Committee for the Americas concerning the draft fourteenth general programme of work, 2025–2028, that WHO should identify concrete outcomes and outputs and show how WHO would demonstrate its added value in achieving results. The participation of countries in WHO governance and networks would lead to better global health results and collaboration with a diversity of stakeholders was essential to enhancing health protection. Noting that country impact must be measurable, she urged continued efforts towards an accountable, efficient and transparent WHO.

The representative of BARBADOS commended the support provided to small island developing States in the areas of infection prevention and control, climate change and health, antimicrobial resistance and strengthening laboratory capacity and capabilities. In order to strengthen the Region's human resources capacity, he called on the Secretariat to explore South–South collaboration, the engagement of non-State actors and the use of digital technologies, and to combat the movement of health care workers out of the Region.

The representative of BRAZIL welcomed the focus in the draft fourteenth general programme of work on the determinants of health and achieving universal health coverage. WHO should provide support for strengthened and comprehensive health systems. Constructive and coordinated participation by the Region of the Americas in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response and the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) was essential. She welcomed the support of PAHO, which had contributed to a better understanding of national positions and identification of points of convergence. The Region of the Americas comprised many diverse countries and faced several public health crises, and she called for the effective and fair allocation of an increased budgetary envelope.

The representative of the COMOROS, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, took note of efforts to enhance alignment between the regional committees and the Executive Board. Current and future challenges transcended national borders and would require the commitment of governments and other stakeholders from across the health ecosystem. She recognized the frameworks adopted by the regional committees to strengthen capacities and accelerate progress towards universal health coverage, health security and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. The regions' knowledge and talent should be leveraged to create safer and more resilient health systems, including through the strengthening of the core capacities required by the International Health

Regulations (2005) and the application of WHO guidance in the areas of noncommunicable diseases, nutrition, food insecurity, cardiovascular disease and antimicrobial resistance, as well as the development of the pandemic agreement. Communication systems should be adapted to better meet populations' needs. The successful implementation of multisectoral action to enhance emergency response and resilience would depend on the capacity to act strategically and flexibly. She called for greater regional collaboration and exchange of experience. Future reports of the regional committees to the Executive Board should contain a table with comparative data from across the regions relating to the global performance indicators, which would demonstrate the priorities and specific contexts of each region.

The representative of the RUSSIAN FEDERATION<sup>1</sup> took note of the strict adherence by the WHO Regional Office for Europe to the European Programme of Work 2020–2025 and the progress made in providing support to Member States in response to their needs. Nonetheless, she expressed concern regarding the paralysing influence of political bias on the part of the countries of the European Union on the work of WHO in the European Region, including barriers to the participation of Russian experts in certain events, and recalled that the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases was no longer operating in Moscow. She encouraged the Secretariat to investigate her concerns and urged Member States to overcome their bias and return to constructive interaction.

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA said that, during the seventy-third session of the Regional Committee for Africa, Member States had discussed WHO's achievements and challenges and the importance of including health in multisectoral actions in the future. Guided by the lessons learned from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Committee had emphasized the importance of equity, national and regional self-reliance, national health systems focused on primary health care, and integrated, people-centred health services. Commitments made during that session of the Committee were being implemented, including the launch of an mRNA vaccine manufacturing facility in Rwanda and the development of people-centred approaches to health care. She highlighted the importance of financing approaches in minimizing decentralization. The Committee had reviewed the draft Proposed programme budget 2024–2025, endorsing the objectives on strengthening country capacity and enhancing accountability and transparency. Information had been provided on the investment round and on improving equitable resource allocation.

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE AMERICAS thanked the representatives of Barbados and Brazil for highlighting the Region's achievements and challenges. At the seventy-fifth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas, Member States had discussed the draft fourteenth general programme of work, welcomed the shift to a stronger WHO country presence, and asked the WHO Secretariat to identify specific outcomes and outputs. The Committee had emphasized the need to ensure that the views of all Member States were represented in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body and the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005). He drew attention to the documents approved by the Committee, which reflected the Region's priorities. An update on the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region had been provided and Member States had emphasized the need to guarantee equitable access to all pandemic response tools and to support preparedness through the strengthening of regional manufacturing capacity for vaccines and health technologies. The Committee had considered a report on the application of the International Health Regulations (2005) in the Americas, noting the need to continue strengthening the core capacities required by the Regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR EUROPE said that the international conference to commemorate the forty-fifth anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care, held immediately prior to the seventy-third session of the Regional Committee for Europe, had seen broad participation and he commended the intergenerational work that had led to its outcome document. The theme of the Regional Committee had been resilience: resilient governance, a resilient health system and resilient people. To that end, WHO should listen to Member States and strengthen their trust in the Organization; hospitals should be fit-for-purpose and equipped with digital tools; and efforts should be made to seek peace as the prerequisite for mentally and physically resilient people. The Committee had discussed the safety of health and care workers, and how to tackle emerging health challenges, including climate change, antimicrobial resistance and pandemic preparedness. He drew attention to the new accountability report introduced by the Committee.

The CHEF DU CABINET, REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, said that he was speaking on behalf of the Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. At the seventieth session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, Member States had discussed how to address the escalating challenges posed by humanitarian emergencies in the Region, and had endorsed regional frameworks on noncommunicable diseases in emergencies, public health readiness for mass gatherings, and on climate change, health and environment. The Committee had called for action to ensure that the health workforce in the Region was fit-for-purpose, in the light of the gaps highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee had nominated Dr Hanan Hassan Balkhy of Saudi Arabia to become the new Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean from 1 February 2024.

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA drew attention to the resolutions and decisions adopted during the seventy-sixth session of the Regional Committee for South-East Asia and highlighted the significant progress in disease elimination and interruption in the Region. The Committee had discussed the implementation of the Programme budget 2022–2023 and the draft Proposed programme budget 2024–2025, commending the consultative process that had led to the development of the latter and noting that the proposed increase in assessed contributions would enhance WHO's financial sustainability. The Committee had called for a robust results management framework in the draft fourteenth general programme of work to enable regular assessment and enhance impact measurement. The Committee had expressed support for the Secretariat's efforts to achieve sustainable financing, including through innovative funding mechanisms. It had adopted a regional declaration on strengthening primary health care that was in alignment with previous landmark texts to achieve universal health coverage. It had also endorsed the regional strategic framework to end neglected tropical diseases in the Region, and she highlighted progress made over the previous decade. The Committee had urged Member States to participate in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body and the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005), in the development of the global architecture for emergency preparedness, prevention and response, and in regional initiatives.

In order to achieve universal health coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee had highlighted the need for civil registration and statistics systems and had proposed an additional indicator relating to unmet health needs. The Committee had advocated for the use of transformative digital technologies and for the full use of all data, and had called for investment in leadership structures, governance, sustainability, people-centred data collection approaches and leveraging digital technology. Consultations would continue on whether to expand the scope of the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund in order to strengthen health emergency preparedness and response. The Committee had reconfirmed its commitments to ending tuberculosis, and called for greater regional collaboration in monitoring tuberculosis among migrants and an enhanced focus at the global level on low-burden countries. She highlighted amendments made to the Committee's Rules of Procedure, which included the adoption of gender-neutral language and webcasting of the

Committee's meetings. The Committee had nominated Ms Saima Wazed to become the new Regional Director for South-East Asia from 1 February 2024.

The ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC said that, at its seventy-fourth session, the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific had made history by nominating the first ever Regional Director from the Pacific, following a transparent and participatory election process. The incoming Regional Director would have to balance the implementation of the draft fourteenth general programme of work with the Region's priorities, set out in the regional action frameworks; support the initiative to amend the International Health Regulations (2005), which would strengthen capacity and delivery at the country level; and continue WHO reform at the regional level. Since 2022, the Regional Office had been reviewing and simplifying processes; delegating authority to WHO Representatives and directors; empowering colleagues, especially technical coordinators; and ensuring that colleagues felt safe, respected, valued and motivated. The Committee had noted the significant impact resulting from the regional change management group introduced to coordinate the various initiatives under way. Four action frameworks had been adopted on health security, health workforces, strategic communication and innovation. Moreover, the Committee had discussed health financing, climate resilience and low-carbon health systems, as well as non-technical items such as governance reform and the updating of the Committee's Rules of Procedure. She commended the collaborative work undertaken prior to the Regional Committee meeting.

**The Board noted the report.**

#### **PILLAR 4: MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WHO PROVIDING BETTER SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES**

##### **2. STAFFING MATTERS:** Item 28 of the agenda

**The meeting was held in private session from 09:55 to 11:05,  
when it resumed in public session.**

**Appointment of the Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean:** Item 28.1 of the agenda (document EB154/43)

At the request of the CHAIR, the RAPPORTEUR read out the resolution on the appointment of the Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean adopted by the Board in private session:<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Board,

Considering the provisions of Article 52 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization and Rule 56 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board;

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution EB154.R1.

Considering also the nomination made by the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean at its seventieth session,<sup>1</sup>

1. APPOINTS Dr Hanan Hassan Balkhy as Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean as from 1 February 2024;
2. AUTHORIZES the Director-General to issue a contract to Dr Hanan Hassan Balkhy for a period of five years as from 1 February 2024, subject to the provisions of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

The CHAIR congratulated Dr Balkhy on her appointment and conveyed the Board's best wishes for success in her post.

**At the invitation of the CHAIR, Dr Balkhy took the oath of office contained in Staff Regulation 1.10 and signed her contract.**

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR-ELECT FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN recognized that she had been appointed as Regional Director at a crucial juncture of evolving geopolitics, frequent emergencies, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The connection between health and climate was undeniable, and every humanitarian crisis was a health crisis. Health goals could not be achieved without peace, towards which all should strive at the global and regional levels. She emphasized the diversity of her Region, which meant that guaranteeing health for all required innovative, evidence-based approaches. During her campaign, she had emphasized the importance of prioritizing health access and investing in robust and resilient health systems, and of collective efforts to ensure that WHO remained the leading global health agency. With her team, she was committed to enhancing end-to-end supply chains to ensure universal access to essential medicines and supplies and to fostering collaboration to build a skilled and sufficient health workforce. She commended the accomplishments of the outgoing Regional Director and looked forward to receiving his counsel in her new position. She thanked the Board for its trust.

At the invitation of the CHAIR, the RAPPORTEUR read out a resolution of appreciation adopted by the Board in private session:<sup>2</sup>

The Executive Board,

Desiring to express its appreciation to Dr Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari, for his services as Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean;

Mindful of Dr Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari's lifelong, professional devotion to the cause of global health, and recalling especially his five years of service as Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean;

Recalling resolution EM/RC70/R.8 (2023) adopted by the seventieth session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, which designated Dr Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari Director Emeritus of the Eastern Mediterranean Region,

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<sup>1</sup> See resolution EM/RC70/R.7 (2023).

<sup>2</sup> Resolution EB154.R4.

1. EXPRESSES its profound gratitude and appreciation to Dr Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari for his invaluable contribution to the work of WHO, especially his dedicated leadership and invaluable contribution to health development in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region;
2. ADDRESSES to him on this occasion its sincere good wishes for many further years of service to the global health community.

The OUTGOING REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN said that it had been an honour and privilege to lead the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and collaborate with such a dedicated body of professionals at an extraordinary time in global health. The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic on preparedness and response must be fully adopted and integrated. His Region had been affected by multiple crises caused by natural disasters and conflicts, which had demonstrated the link between climate, health and peace. Noting with regret the avoidable loss of health workers in those crises, he commended the resilience of WHO staff, particularly on the ground. WHO should play an active role in steering humanity towards security, stability, peace and prosperity, thereby enhancing global health and well-being. His strategy for the Region had been grounded in the belief that health was a shared responsibility.

He commended the leadership of the Director-General, whose “countries first” vision would achieve better health outcomes by adequately resourcing and equipping regional offices to support Member States. With appropriate strategies, investments, incentives and partnerships, it would be possible to achieve tangible results. He congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on her appointment – her professionalism, dedication and passion for the Region would undoubtedly lead to success. He remained committed to supporting the work of the Region in the future.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on her appointment. She had earned Member States’ confidence and trust through a distinguished career in public health. She faced serious challenges in a region marked with acute and chronic emergencies. It was time to renew efforts towards achieving the triple billion targets and the Sustainable Development Goals. However, she was not alone in the task, as she was supported by the staff of the Regional Office and headquarters.

He commended the outstanding leadership of the outgoing Regional Director over the previous five years, despite unprecedented challenges caused by wars and climate change and significant health threats, in building a healthier, safer and fairer Region for all. He looked forward to continuing to collaborate with all the outgoing Regional Directors going forward.

The representative of RWANDA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on her appointment. Her experience and achievements in health leadership would help to advance WHO’s efforts to improve health services and outcomes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and globally. His Region was committed to working with her to consolidate existing gains and find effective solutions to current and future challenges in health care delivery. Areas for cross-regional health cooperation should include health workforce development, sharing innovative solutions in primary health care, technology transfer for local pharmaceutical production, and building regulatory capacity.

The representative of PERU, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Region of the Americas, expressed appreciation to the outgoing Regional Director for his dedication and leadership in health promotion, which had had a positive impact in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. He congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on her appointment, recognizing her previous achievements as Assistant Director-General for Antimicrobial Resistance and trusting in her ability to make a significant contribution to the promotion of health and well-being worldwide.

The representative of the SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, welcomed the Regional Director-Elect, whose experience and commitment would strengthen work towards the Region's priorities. Her election had come at a critical moment, but he expressed confidence that her impact on the Region would be positive. The Member States of the Region were ready to support her efforts to attain the Region's goals. He expressed gratitude to the outgoing Regional Director for his significant contribution in helping the Region to overcome many challenges together with his team. Going forward, the Regional Office would undoubtedly enjoy unprecedented successes, working within its means to achieve sustainable and tangible results.

The representative of the DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the South-East Asia Region, expressed her appreciation to the outgoing Regional Director and commended his devotion to progress in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. She congratulated the Regional Director-Elect and looked forward to close collaboration with her Region in the future.

**Appointment of the Regional Director for South-East Asia:** Item 28.2 of the agenda (document EB154/44)

At the request of the CHAIR, the RAPPORTEUR read out the resolution on the appointment of the Regional Director for South-East Asia adopted by the Board in private session:<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Board,

Considering the provisions of Article 52 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization and Rule 56 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board;

Considering also the nomination made by the Regional Committee for South-East Asia at its seventy-sixth session,<sup>2</sup>

1. APPOINTS Ms Saima Wazed as Regional Director for South-East Asia as from 1 February 2024;
2. AUTHORIZES the Director-General to issue a contract to Ms Saima Wazed for a period of five years as from 1 February 2024, subject to the provisions of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

The CHAIR congratulated Ms Wazed on her appointment and conveyed the Board's best wishes for success in her post.

**At the invitation of the CHAIR, Ms Wazed took the oath of office contained in Staff Regulation 1.10 and signed her contract.**

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR-ELECT FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA congratulated the Regional Directors for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Pacific on their appointments, noting that they all faced different journeys but sought to achieve the same goal. She recognized the outgoing Regional Director's experience and contribution to public health in the South-East Asia Region, and looked forward to drawing on her guidance in the future. With the close collaboration of the Director-General,

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution EB154.R2.

<sup>2</sup> See resolution SEA/RC76/R1 (2023).



her Region was ready to face any challenge. She expressed appreciation for the nomination by her Government and was grateful for the trust placed in her leadership by Member States. She would seek to exemplify the qualities of leadership with compassion, and care for people who were disenfranchised and in need.

She was committed to taking a collaborative approach to the role of Regional Director, working with the Member States of the Region to create solutions tailored to their needs, and cooperating closely with country offices to implement the “one WHO” approach. She would strive to implement global WHO priorities in her Region, alongside the priorities she had outlined during her election campaign. First, mental health was a long-neglected area of work, and there should be relative parity between physical and mental health in national health care systems. Second, specific interventions for women and children, including pregnant women, should focus on education, empowerment and prevention throughout the life course in the areas of well-being, vaccination, nutrition and resilience. Success in those areas would have multi-generational benefits and improve the health of communities. Third, the use of technology granted access to untold possibilities of innovation in public health to enhance telemedicine, patient monitoring, data-driven diagnostics and personalized treatment, and the digitalization of health systems would bring benefits at the individual and country levels. Fourth, financing to support the work of the Region should be transparent, sustainable and provide a return on investment. Finally, the Regional Office for South-East Asia would explore partnerships with ministers of other sectors, as the determinants of health included factors from beyond the health sector. Such collaboration could provide access to budgets housed in non-health portfolios.

At the invitation of the CHAIR, the RAPPORTEUR read out a resolution of appreciation adopted by the Board in private session:<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Board,

Desiring to express its appreciation to Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, for her services as Regional Director for South-East Asia;

Mindful of Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh’s lifelong, professional devotion to the cause of global health, and recalling especially her 10 years of service as Regional Director for South-East Asia;

Recalling resolution SEA/RC76/R2 (2023) adopted by the Seventy-sixth Session of the Regional Committee for South-East Asia, which designated Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh Director Emeritus of the South-East Asia Region,

1. EXPRESSES its profound gratitude and appreciation to Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh for her invaluable contribution to the work of WHO, especially over the past decade, her exemplary leadership, and her strategic vision to achieve tangible and measurable improvements in the health and well-being of the people of the WHO South-East Asia Region through prioritizing the most pressing needs in the form of eight Regional Flagship Priority Programmes; and her diligence to secure the health of all the people, her stewardship and her relentless pursuit of excellence in disease elimination in the Region;
2. ADDRESSES to her on this occasion its sincere good wishes for many further years of service to the global health community.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution EB154.R5.

The OUTGOING REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA said that, on her appointment, her vision had been to create a Region that was more responsive, inclusive and accountable. Ten years later, she expressed her gratitude to the Member States in her Region for their commitment and support throughout her mandate; a mandate that had begun with the attainment of the Region's polio-free status and had finished with the end of the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted achievements in combating communicable diseases, achieving universal health coverage, reducing poverty due to health spending, and increasing the health workforce and core capacities required by the International Health Regulations (2005) in the Region. The innovative South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund had supported more than 43 emergencies in the Region and continued to strengthen preparedness. She also drew attention to improvements in newborn, under five and maternal mortality; premature deaths from noncommunicable diseases; and access to treatment for tuberculosis in countries with a high burden of the disease. All of those achievements represented real lives that had been saved or changed for the better. Such accomplishments could be attributed to programmatic reforms, under which measurable, time-bound flagship programmes had been implemented, regional budgetary allocations to country offices had increased, programme evaluation had been prioritized, more partnerships had been developed, and knowledge generation had flourished. She noted the enhanced political commitment in the Region, and the overarching focus on reaching vulnerable populations to ensure that no one was left behind. She had been struck repeatedly by the resilience and optimism of health and care workers, policy-makers and other stakeholders, even in the shadow of the most disruptive health crisis in more than a century. Together, the Region and its Member States had achieved extraordinary goals.

She expressed her gratitude to all members of the Executive Board, who had supported her as Regional Director and had been responsive to the Region's collective ambition to strengthen global health governance, shape the global health agenda, and fulfil the right to universal health coverage and to the highest attainable standards of health. She commended the Director-General's leadership and his support of her Region. She welcomed the support from her Government, including for the new Regional Office building in New Delhi. She congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on her appointment, recognizing that her expertise would certainly lead to further progress in the Region. She expressed her heartfelt thanks to the Member States of her Region for their support, vision, capacity to deliver game-changing programmes and unity over the previous decade, which had shaped the global health agenda, especially regarding primary health care. Global health equity was both a regional and an Organization-wide priority. She commended the collaboration of partners and staff across the three levels of WHO, including other Regional Directors, and highlighted their diverse and valuable contributions to her Region. She expressed the hope that such excellence would continue. She was proud and grateful to have served WHO for 25 years.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL congratulated the Regional Director-Elect for South-East Asia on her appointment. The Region was extremely diverse, as were the health challenges faced by its Member States. Her work would begin at a critical moment as WHO sought to catalyse progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Highlighting the privilege and the responsibility of the position, he assured the Regional Director-Elect of his support, and that of all WHO staff members.

He thanked the outgoing Regional Director for her outstanding leadership and dedication throughout her long career at WHO. She had led the Regional Office for South-East Asia with clarity and stability, caring for the health of such a diverse region and leaving a firm foundation on which to build. He hoped that it would be possible to find a way to leverage the wisdom of the outgoing Regional Directors.

The representative of RWANDA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on her appointment. Her experience and achievements in health leadership would help to advance WHO's efforts to improve health services and outcomes in the South-East Asia Region and globally. His Region was committed to working with her to consolidate

existing gains and find effective solutions to current and future challenges in health care delivery. Areas for cross-regional health cooperation should include health workforce development, innovative solutions in primary health care, technology transfer for local pharmaceutical production, and building regulatory capacity.

The representative of PERU, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Region of the Americas, expressed appreciation to the outgoing Regional Director for her dedication and leadership, and recalled that she had been the first female Regional Director in the South-East Asia Region. He congratulated the Regional Director-Elect, expressing his conviction that she would lead the Region efficiently. His Region would work with her for the health and well-being of all.

The representative of YEMEN, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, welcomed the Regional Director-Elect, noting that her expertise and dedication would contribute to advancing health and well-being in her Region and beyond. He commended the outgoing Regional Director for her exceptional work and valuable impact on WHO.

The representative of MALDIVES, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the South-East Asia Region, said that the outgoing Regional Director had made history as the first female Regional Director in the Region and commended her unprecedented achievements in improving health and well-being. From the start of her tenure, she had worked towards eight flagship priorities, and had achieved significant results, including the elimination of more than 20 diseases; the development of the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund, which met urgent needs until formal assistance could be delivered; and the establishment in Thailand of the WHO Collaborating Centre for the Prevention and Control of Poisoning, which promoted universal and timely access to antidotes, antitoxins and antivenoms across the Region. He welcomed the Regional Director-Elect, encouraging her to continue mobilizing the social and intellectual capital of WHO in order to maintain and advance support to Member States.

The representative of BANGLADESH<sup>1</sup> congratulated the Regional Directors-Elect and expressed appreciation to the outgoing Regional Directors for their dedicated service. He thanked the Executive Board for entrusting the leadership of the South-East Asia Region to the candidate nominated by his Government, who would surely continue to strengthen health services in the Region. The new Regional Directors should seek to implement WHO's agenda and support Member States to meet their needs.

The representative of INDIA<sup>1</sup> congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on her appointment, noting the confidence and trust placed in her by the Executive Board to lead the Region in meeting its health challenges at a crucial moment in history. Her Government would work with the Regional Director-Elect, confident that she could build on the Region's past successes. In that regard, she commended the outgoing Regional Director for her ten years of service, in particular her efforts to address the Region's complex health challenges, which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notable achievements had included the high regional rate of immunization coverage, the improvement in all health indicators, and the progress made towards universal health coverage.

The representative of THAILAND<sup>1</sup> commended the leadership and dedication of the outgoing Regional Director, especially in the implementation of flagship programmes. The Regional Office for South-East Asia had been the first to eliminate alcohol and sweetened drinks from its events. Other regional offices had now followed suit and she was confident that WHO could serve as a role model for

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<sup>1</sup> Participating by virtue of Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board.

health promotion. She looked forward to collaborating with the Regional Director-Elect to further improve the health of the people in the Region.

**Appointment of the Regional Director for the Western Pacific:** Item 28.3 of the agenda (document EB154/45)

At the request of the CHAIR, the RAPPORTEUR read out the resolution on the appointment of the Regional Director for the Western Pacific adopted by the Board in private session:<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Board,

Considering the provisions of Article 52 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization and Rule 56 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board;

Considering also the nomination made by the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific at its seventy-fourth session,<sup>2</sup>

1. APPOINTS Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala as Regional Director for the Western Pacific as from 1 February 2024;
2. AUTHORIZES the Director-General to issue a contract to Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala for a period of five years as from 1 February 2024, subject to the provisions of the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules.

The CHAIR congratulated Dr Piukala on his appointment and conveyed the Board's best wishes for success in his post.

**At the invitation of the CHAIR, Dr Piukala took the oath of office contained in Staff Regulation 1.10 and signed his contract.**

The REGIONAL DIRECTOR-ELECT FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC expressed his appreciation for the trust placed in him as the first Regional Director from the Pacific. While that was a source of pride for the Pacific people, he recognized that his task was to support all members of the Region. He was committed to seeking counsel and guidance from Member States, acknowledging that working together was the way to make a difference. The Western Pacific Region was one of the most diverse WHO regions, and it faced similar challenges to other regions, albeit on a different scale: communicable and noncommunicable diseases, mental health, maternal and child health, malnutrition, universal access to health care, ageing populations, climate change and emerging threats.

Six thematic priorities would help the Region: promoting an integrated approach to health system development, using primary health care to achieve universal health coverage; accelerated action on climate change and health; building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic; working with Member States to understand national priorities and develop evidence-based practices; strengthening working methods; and acknowledging the importance of WHO staff members, with a focus on the core values of respect, trust, solidarity, resilience and a people-centred approach.

He acknowledged the contribution of his predecessors and expressed appreciation for the support of his family. He would work with Member States, the Director-General and the other Regional Directors to implement the Organization's programmes of work and ensure that no child needed to worry about their future health.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution EB154.R3.

<sup>2</sup> See resolution WPR/RC74.R1 (2023).

At the invitation of the CHAIR, the RAPPORTEUR read out a resolution of appreciation adopted by the Board in private session:<sup>1</sup>

The Executive Board,

Desiring to express its appreciation to Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab for her services as Acting Regional Director for the Western Pacific;

Mindful of Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab's lifelong, professional devotion to the cause of global health, and recalling especially her service collectively as Officer-in-Charge of the Regional Office for the Western Pacific then Acting Regional Director for the Western Pacific since August 2022, as Deputy Director-General since 2019, and as Regional Director for Europe from 2010 to 2019,

1. EXPRESSES its profound gratitude and appreciation to Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab for her invaluable contribution to the work of WHO, especially her efforts to ensure continuation of the work and activities of WHO in the Western Pacific Region through a difficult and critical period;
2. ADDRESSES to her on this occasion its sincere good wishes for many further years of service to the global health community.

The OUTGOING ACTING REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC congratulated the Regional Director-Elect, whose expertise and commitment would serve him well, and acknowledged the commitment of the Member States to the health and well-being of the Region. She had been asked to step in as officer in charge of the Regional Office in 2022 and had been nominated to serve as acting Regional Director in March 2023. Having worked hard to maintain momentum towards the Region's priorities and vision, she had sought to hand over a well-functioning and respectful workplace. To that end and to ensure organizational preparedness, integrity and the agility to achieve future goals, she had accelerated the roll-out of the WHO transformation agenda and had fostered positive organizational and cultural change. It had been an honour for her to serve the Western Pacific Region, the second region she had served as Regional Director since joining WHO 30 years previously. She thanked the Director-General and Member States for their support and trust throughout the periods of challenge, transformation and celebration.

The DIRECTOR-GENERAL, recognizing the historic nature of the appointment, congratulated the Regional Director-Elect for the Western Pacific. The position conferred great privilege and responsibility. The Region was among the most diverse of WHO regions and the scale of health challenges was immense. He assured the Regional Director of the support available from the staff at the Regional Office and headquarters and emphasized the importance of the "one WHO" approach.

He thanked the outgoing acting Regional Director for her years of service to WHO as Regional Director for Europe, Deputy Director-General and acting Regional Director for the Western Pacific. He commended her readiness and commitment to serve the Organization. She had steered the Regional Office through an uncertain period, and her work had provided a firm basis on which the new Regional Director could build.

The representative of RWANDA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the African Region, congratulated the Regional Director-Elect on his appointment. His experience and achievements in health leadership would help to advance WHO's efforts to improve health services and outcomes in the Western Pacific Region and globally. His Region was committed to working with him to consolidate

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution EB154.R6.

existing gains and find effective solutions to current and future challenges in health care delivery. Areas for cross-regional health cooperation should include health workforce development, innovative solutions in primary health care, technology transfer for local pharmaceutical production, and building regulatory capacity.

The representative of PERU, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Region of the Americas, expressed his Region's appreciation to the outgoing acting Regional Director for her dedication to the Western Pacific Region. He welcomed the Regional Director-Elect and assured him of his Region's support.

The representative of MOROCCO, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, welcomed the Regional Director-Elect, whose dynamic vision for the Region would complement WHO's mission. He looked forward to fruitful cooperation among regions to meet shared goals. He expressed his appreciation to the outgoing acting Regional Director, recognizing her positive impact across the Organization.

The representative of DENMARK, speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States said that the candidate countries Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia aligned themselves with his statement. He thanked the three outgoing Regional Directors for their dedication and tireless efforts to advance global health, noting their collaboration with Member States, governing bodies and the Secretariat. He welcomed the Regional Directors-Elect for the Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asia and the Western Pacific, and wished them steadfastness, agility and success in meeting challenges, including those common to all regions, such as pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, the connection between environment and health, and the burden of noncommunicable diseases. The European Union and its Member States looked forward to working closely with all regions and to learning the priorities of the new Regional Directors.

The representative of TIMOR-LESTE, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the South-East Asia Region, expressed her appreciation to the outgoing acting Regional Director for leading the transition in the Western Pacific Region and acknowledged the progress made in health in the Region and beyond. She congratulated the Regional Director-Elect and looked forward to continued close collaboration between the two Regions.

The representative of the FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA, speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Western Pacific Region, congratulated the three Regional Directors-Elect and looked forward to collaborating with them. He noted, in particular, the technical work and management skills demonstrated by the Regional Director-Elect for the Eastern Mediterranean in her previous position as Assistant Director-General for Antimicrobial Resistance.

He expressed his appreciation to the outgoing acting Regional Director for her dedication over the previous 15 months, advancing regional health priorities while strengthening the organizational culture in the Regional Office. He welcomed the Regional Director-Elect, noting his skills in public health leadership and his technical experience in a wide range of key health issues, alongside a sensitivity and focus on organizational culture and staff well-being. WHO's most diverse region faced significant health challenges, including the impact of climate change and the burden of noncommunicable diseases, which could only be faced with strengthened health systems. The Member States of the Region would work closely with the Regional Director to advance health for all, through the implementation of the draft fourteenth general programme of work and the delivery of the Region's health priorities.

**The meeting rose at 13:00.**

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