

**SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA
DAKAR, REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL
27–31 AUGUST 2018**

**Summary Report from Mr Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr
Minister of Health and Social Action, Senegal**

The Regional Committee (RC) met in Dakar, Republic of Senegal, from 27 to 31 August 2018, and was chaired by Mr Abdoulaye Diouf Sarr from Senegal. This statement summarizes the main outcomes of the meeting

PART 1: TOPICS FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSION

Development of the road map on access to medicines and vaccines

The RC reviewed the draft document on *development of the road map on access to medicines and vaccines* developed in response to the report on ‘Addressing the global shortage of and access to, medicines and vaccines’ presented at the Seventy-first World Health Assembly (Document A71/12). It outlined the programming of WHO’s work on access to medicines and vaccines for the period 2019-2023 and discussed the 10 consolidated areas of action for prioritization.

Delegates noted a number of challenges, including the high cost of medical products and vaccines, especially for middle-income countries that are not eligible for Gavi support; quality of medicines in the Region; inadequate pharmacovigilance and regulation of medical products; and the need for coordinated efforts at regional and subregional levels to increase access to medicines and vaccines. They recommended that WHO and partners should provide support for local manufacturing to reduce cost and improve access to health products among others.

Draft global strategy on health, environment and climate change

The RC discussed *the draft document on a comprehensive strategy on health, environment and climate change*. The draft document outlines a vision and way forward on how the world and its health community need to respond to environmental health risks and challenges. It proposes six strategic objectives for the required transformation, aligned with the 13th GPW to measure progress towards related SDGs.

Delegates welcomed the multisectoral approach adopted in the draft strategy and highlighted the need to further develop the framework and consider environmental surveillance as a strategic objective; recognize the key role of urbanization as a risk factor in environmental health; highlight the use of technology; and strengthen environmental and climate research capacity. It was also noted that some Member States have started initiative on building healthy environment and addressing climate change.

Proposed programme budget 2020-2021

The RC reviewed the *proposed programme budget 2020-2021*, which sought Member States' confirmation of the alignment of country needs with GPW13 strategic priorities geared towards achieving results at country level and providing feedback on the implications of the country prioritization process for the implementation of the Programme Budget.

Delegates welcomed the report and the programme budget direction that was adopted through a consultative and bottom-up process. They congratulated WHO for a well-thought-out high-level budget that focuses on countries achieving the “triple billion” goals. Delegates requested that its implementation be equally driven by countries with due consideration for their specific needs and underscored the importance of strengthening human resource capacity at country level to ensure the successful implementation of strategic priorities. They underscored the relevance of adopting a more flexible approach to financing in order to align resources to country needs.

Development of a draft global action plan on the health of refugees and migrants

The RC discussed the draft global action plan on the health of refugees and migrants, which highlighted the challenges faced by refugees and migrants. The draft plan proposed some steps to address the challenges faced by migrants and refugees.

Member States welcomed the draft action plan, noting that several countries in the Region faced these challenges. However, the delegates noted that there were discrepancies in wording and content between the version of the document being reviewed at the Regional Committee and the online version. They also noted that some of these discrepancies included issues that were in conflict with the laws and values of Member States, and sought the assurance of the Secretariat that these concerns would be taken into account during finalization of the action plan.

PART 2: TOPICS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Work of WHO in the African Region 2017-2018: Report of the Regional Director

The RC reviewed the report of the Regional Director, which reflects the work accomplished under the six categories of the 12th General Programme of Work 2014-2019. The report noted that the Transformation Agenda was enabling WHO to provide the best possible support to Member States. WHO/AFRO invested in the development of a robust results framework with programmatic and managerial key performance indicators (KPIs), which have enhanced targeted training, responsiveness and results-oriented actions.

Delegates commended coherence across all levels of the Organization as well as its immense support for the response to Ebola outbreaks in the Region. Member States stressed the importance of implementing the International Health Regulations (2005) and maximizing coordination between countries and partner agencies. The delegates also underscored the need to strengthen the NCD prevention programme. They requested WHO and partners to take action on commercial determinants of health in NCDs, and to advocate for cross-cutting interventions to control outbreaks and other epidemics.

Progress report on the Implementation of the Transformation Agenda of the World Health Organization Secretariat in the African Region: 2015–2020

The RC discussed the document entitled Progress report on the Implementation of the Transformation Agenda of the World Health Organization Secretariat in the African Region: 2015-2020. This document is the third progress report and covers three years of implementation of the Transformation Agenda. It highlights the progress made, puts forward proposals for ensuring the successful completion of the Agenda and incorporates feedback from stakeholders.

Member States commended the Regional Director for the progress made in the implementation of the Transformation Agenda in the Region. They reaffirmed the need to reduce financial dependence on donors by: establishing innovative domestic sources of health financing; focusing more on the improvement of governance and financing for health; coordinating assessments undertaken by various stakeholders in countries to ensure coherence and implementation of the recommendations; strengthening south-south cooperation; and considering the introduction of a ranking mechanism for countries that is based on health systems performance relative to sound criteria.

Report on regional managerial Compliance activities and matters arising out of Internal and External Audits

The RC discussed the report on regional managerial compliance activities and matters arising out of internal and external audits. The paper highlights the progress made in the implementation of the Accountability and Internal Control Strengthening project in relation to its five pillars. The paper also addressed the challenges encountered and proposes next steps.

Delegates commended the Secretariat for the improved managerial compliance and internal controls. They acknowledged current challenges to appropriate financial management and internal control frameworks within Member States. They also urged the Secretariat to continue supporting Member States that still have weak capacity to ensure that they comply with WHO financial rules and regulations. Member States were urged to commit to ensuring that Direct Financial Cooperation reports are submitted within three months of completion of activities; advocate strongly for additional funding for the enabling functions at global governance meetings; nominate management and financial experts to the its committees for adequate engagement on financial and management issues.

WHO's work on Resource Mobilization through strengthening partnerships to better support Member States

The RC discussed the document entitled WHO's work on resource mobilization through strengthening partnerships to better support Member States. The report reviews the progress made over the last two bienniums (2014-2015 and 2016-2017) and proposes the next steps. Despite the progress made, several challenges have emerged. These include the ramp down of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative and the suboptimal and delayed contributions from Member States to the African Public Health Emergency Fund.

Delegates recognized the challenges inherent in resource mobilization. They affirmed the importance of the KPIs as enabling factors for monitoring and accountability. They called on Member States to increase their domestic investment in health to support implementation of the 13th GPW. Delegates requested WHO and partners to: develop standard operating procedures and the necessary regulatory and legal resources to guide the implementation of public-private partnerships; and develop business models to facilitate resource mobilization.

Regional framework for the implementation of the global Strategy for cholera prevention and control, 2018–2030

The RC reviewed the document entitled Regional framework for the implementation of the global strategy for cholera prevention and control. The framework provides guidance on the implementation of the global strategy for prevention and control of cholera, which remains a major public health problem in the Region. It proposes key actions for Member States.

Member States acknowledged the challenges of recurring cholera outbreaks in several countries due to lack of access to safely managed sources of drinking-water and sanitation facilities in the Region. They emphasized the need for stronger multisectoral collaboration. Delegates reiterated the need for high-level political commitment for enhanced coordination and resource mobilization. They called for the escalation of preventative measures, mapping of areas prone to cholera outbreaks for targeted interventions. They requested WHO support in developing a multisectoral mechanism for tracking progress during the implementation of the Framework for cholera prevention and control.

Framework for certification of polio eradication in the African Region

The RC considered the framework for certification of polio eradication in the African Region. It proposed priority interventions for Member States to progress towards certification of polio eradication in the African Region, and to sustain a polio-free Region post certification. It noted that despite progress made, the Region runs the risk of not being certified polio-free due to chronic surveillance gaps and low population immunity.

Delegates expressed concerns with outbreaks of circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPVs) in some countries due to low population immunity. The Lake Chad Basin countries were commended for their innovative joint approach to polio control, especially in insecure and hard-to-reach areas. The need to close the observed gaps in surveillance and population immunity and to avoid complacency as the Region approaches certification was stressed. They called on Member States to: strengthen polio surveillance, outbreak response quality and routine immunization, including in insecure areas and displaced populations; ensure proper containment of polioviruses and the destruction of potential infectious materials in laboratories; and improve cross-border collaboration activities.

Status of implementation of the four time-bound commitments on noncommunicable diseases in the African Region

The RC discussed the document entitled status of implementation of the four time-bound commitments on noncommunicable diseases in the African Region. The paper highlights progress made and challenges in the implementation of the four time-bound commitments to

addressing NCDs. It proposed priority actions to accelerate the implementation of the WHO Global Action Plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013–2020.

Delegates highlighted the importance of addressing the NCD burden in the Region. They acknowledged the challenges inherent in prevention and control, particularly the multisectoral approach to addressing NCD risk factors. Delegates reiterated the need to mobilize resources from other sectors and development partners. They requested Member States to: leverage existing funding mechanisms such as the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria; strengthen multisectoral approaches to the promotion, prevention, and management of NCDs; among others.

Ensuring Sustainable financing for Universal Health Coverage in Africa in the midst of changing global and local economic factors

The RC discussed the technical paper entitled “ensuring sustainable financing for health in Africa in the midst of changing global and local economic factors”. It noted progress in implementing health financing reforms, including introduction of pre-payment schemes in some countries to improve service coverage and financial protection. It proposed actions for Member States to ensure sustainable financing and protection of populations from financial risk.

The delegates called for improved domestic resource mobilization for health. They underscored the fact that UHC is both a technical and political issue, which will require high level advocacy with Heads of State, parliamentarians and ministers of finance. Furthermore, they recognized the importance of audits and controls to improve efficiency in the use of available resources. Delegates requested WHO to support Member States to implement the proposed actions, including high-level advocacy towards UHC targeting Heads of State, and others.

Draft Code of Conduct for the nomination of the Regional Director

The RC reviewed the proposal for a Code of Conduct for the nomination of the Regional Director. The document builds on the provisions of Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee, with the aim of promoting a transparent, open and equitable process for the nomination of the Regional Director. The document also proposed a resolution, and a standard form for candidates' curriculum vitae.

Member States raised issues pertaining to possible non-compliance with the Code; perceived conflict of interest for internal candidates; and the need to maintain decorum in the use of social media. The Regional Committee adopted the amended Document AFR/RC68/14