

Sixty-ninth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, Egypt, 10–13 October 2022

Summary report by the Chair, H.E. Dr Mai Alkaila, Minister of Health of Palestine

PART 1: TOPICS FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSION

Proposed Programme budget 2024–2025

The Regional Committee received an overview on the draft proposed Programme Budget for 2024–2025, including a draft Region-specific breakdown. Member States discussed the draft proposed Programme Budget in detail; they did not formally adopt a common position through the Regional Committee, but the timeline and process for subsequent consultation with Member States was explained.

Extending the Thirteenth General Programme of Work

The Regional Committee received a presentation on the two-year extension of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work (2019–2023) to 2025. Member States discussed related issues but did not formally adopt a common position.

Strengthening the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience

The Regional Committee received a briefing on the Director-General's proposals for strengthening the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience. Member States discussed related issues but did not formally adopt a common position.

Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response

The Regional Committee received an overview of progress made in setting up the Standing Committee on Health Emergency Prevention, Preparedness and Response, which was established in May 2022 in accordance with decision EB151(2). Morocco and Yemen were endorsed as nominees from the Region to serve on the Standing Committee for a two-year period.¹

Consultations on the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body

The Regional Committee received presentations from the Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) Bureau and the Vice-Chair of the INB on the work of the INB to draft and negotiate a convention, agreement or other international instrument under the Constitution of the WHO to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The timeline of the parallel INB and Working Group on IHR Amendments (WGIHR) processes was outlined. Member States discussed related issues but did not formally adopt a common position.

¹ Decision No. 5.

Other topics for global discussion

The Regional Committee received a presentation on other topics for global discussion, including: the global strategy on infection prevention and control; strengthening clinical trials to provide high-quality evidence on health interventions and to improve research quality and coordination; the Global Health for Peace Initiative; and well-being and health promotion. Regional consultation is being undertaken on several of these issues, but Member States did not formally adopt a common position through the Regional Committee.

PART 2: TOPICS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Building resilient health systems to advance universal health coverage and ensure health security in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The Regional Committee endorsed a regional agenda for building resilient health systems towards universal health coverage and health security.² The agenda aims to provide a systematic approach to addressing gaps and weaknesses highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic through seven regional priorities: strengthening health emergency and disaster risk management; optimizing ministries of health and building public health institutions; establishing primary health care-oriented models of care; enhancing health workforce; promoting equity and enhancing financial protection; improving access to medicines, vaccines and health products; and fostering an integrated approach in policy, planning and investment. Member States were urged to prioritize action across these areas, while WHO was requested to build regional and national expertise in health system strengthening and health emergency and disaster risk management, and to support resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring.

Accelerating the prevention, control and elimination of communicable diseases through integration: optimizing support from Gavi and the Global Fund

The Regional Committee endorsed a strategic framework to coordinate and integrate support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.³ Member States were urged to accelerate the prevention, control and elimination of communicable diseases through integration and optimization of support from Gavi and the Global Fund by implementing strategic directions in six areas: governance, financing, service delivery, health workforce, access to commodities and health information systems. WHO was requested to support them through a range of actions.

Promoting health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: moving from theory to action to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals

The Regional Committee requested WHO to propose a regional roadmap to guide Member States in implementing the well-being agenda in the Region.⁴ Member States were urged to strengthen health and well-being promotion and disease prevention through action across five priority areas: adopting a systems

² EM/RC69/R.2.

³ EM/RC69/R.3.

⁴ EM/RC69/R.4.

approach to health promotion; adopting a settings-based approach to health promotion and well-being; increasing health literacy to promote health and well-being; enhancing community engagement and inclusion; and developing institutional capacity for health promotion. The importance of evidence creation to inform effective planning and assessment of different interventions related to promoting health and well-being was emphasized, and WHO was requested to support interdisciplinary research and develop measurement frameworks to monitor progress in this area, building on measurement systems for the Sustainable Development Goals.

Advancing the implementation of One Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

The Regional Committee endorsed a regional operational framework for One Health setting out guiding principles, strategic objectives, actions for implementation at country level and expected deliverables.⁵ They were urged to adapt the framework to their national contexts and implement it, prioritizing interventions on zoonotic diseases of public health concern, antimicrobial resistance and food safety. As part of efforts to support the operationalization of the One Health approach in the Region, WHO was requested to establish a regional Quadripartite One Health Coordination Mechanism to oversee and manage One Health-related activities and facilitate implementation of the global One Health joint plan of action (2022–2026).

Regional strategy for fostering digital health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (2023–2027)

The Regional Committee endorsed a regional strategy and action plan for fostering digital health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region with four strategic objectives: strengthening digital health governance, norms and standards; advocating for people-centred digital health systems and networks appropriate to regional and national contexts; advancing the development, implementation and evaluation of national digital health strategies; and promoting regional and national stakeholder collaboration towards advancing digital transformation, knowledge translation and innovation.⁶ WHO was requested to support implementation of the strategy, including, inter alia, providing a platform for sharing knowledge and experience about effective and efficient digital health strategies.

Strategy to promote the health and well-being of refugees, migrants, internally displaced populations and other displaced groups in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Recognizing the critical importance of the health and well-being of refugees, migrants and internally displaced populations for advancing universal health coverage, especially given the large numbers of such populations in the Region, the Regional Committee endorsed a regional strategy to promote the health and well-being of refugees, migrants, internally displaced populations and other displaced groups.⁷

⁵ EM/RC69/R.5.

⁶ EM/RC69/R.6.

⁷ EM/RC69/R.1.

Regional cervical cancer elimination strategy

Concerned that implementation of the WHO global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem remains low in the Region, the Regional Committee committed to supporting implementation of the regional cervical cancer elimination strategy, which is aligned with the global strategy.⁸

Regional action plan for the implementation of the Global Health Sector Strategies on HIV, hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections

The Regional Committee also committed to supporting a regional action plan, geared to the cultural and social context of the Region, for the implementation of the Global Health Sector Strategies on HIV, hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections, to accelerate their implementation towards achieving the related 2030 targets.⁹

⁸ EM/RC69/R.1.

⁹ EM/RC69/R.1.