

**SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
WESTERN PACIFIC (MANILA, PHILIPPINES, 16–20 OCTOBER 2023)**

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON (HONOURABLE DATO DR MOHAMMAD ISHAM  
JAAFAR, MINISTER OF HEALTH, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM)<sup>1</sup>**

**Nomination of the Regional Director/Appreciation to Acting Regional Director**

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for the Western Pacific, after considering five potential nominees, adopted resolution WPR/RC74.R1 requesting the WHO Director-General to propose to the Executive Board the appointment of Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala, the current Minister of Health of the Kingdom of Tonga, as the Regional Director for the Western Pacific for a period of five years, commencing on 1 February 2024.

In a resolution of appreciation (WPR/RC74.R2), the Regional Committee commended Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab for her service as Acting Regional Director for the Western Pacific and her exemplary contribution and commitment to the Organization in implementing the regional and global health agenda, while also facilitating work to embed positive organizational and cultural change in the WHO Regional Office and country offices in the Western Pacific.

**Health security**

The Regional Committee adopted resolution WPR/RC74.R3 endorsing the *Asia Pacific Health Security Action Framework*. The Action Framework will enable the Western Pacific Region to address public health threats with a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to strengthening health security systems. Developed in consultation with Member States, partners and experts in the WHO Western Pacific and South-East Asia regions, the Action Framework built upon lessons learnt in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and nearly two decades of implementation of the *Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies* and its earlier iterations. Member States were urged to use the Action Framework as a guide to develop or adapt national action plans for health security, to foster high-level commitment and multisectoral collaboration in support of a coordinated approach to health security at the national and subnational levels, and to ensure adequate and sustainable resources for strengthening health security capacities. The Regional Director was requested to provide technical support to Member States, to facilitate advocacy and collaboration and to report periodically on progress on the Action Framework's implementation.

**Communication for health**

The Regional Committee in resolution WPR/RC74.R4 endorsed the *Regional Action Framework on Communication for Health: A vision for using communication to improve public health in the Western Pacific Region*. The Regional Committee noted the importance of a communication for health (C4H) approach that employs strategic, evidence-informed and people-centred communication to build knowledge, shift attitudes and support behaviour change for better health outcomes. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO in the Western Pacific Region had worked in consultation with Member States to develop, test and strengthen the C4H approach. The resolution urged Member States to use the

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<sup>1</sup> See the final report of the Regional Committee.

Action Framework as a guide in employing C4H to improve knowledge and change attitudes, to assess capacities and guide investments to ensure sufficient resources were mobilized to scale up C4H, and to measure, evaluate and share results for constant improvement of C4H efforts. The Regional Director was requested to disseminate the Action Framework and other related tools and guidance, to provide implementation-related technical support at the regional and national levels, to facilitate stakeholder coordination and to report periodically on progress.

### **Health innovation**

The Regional Committee adopted resolution WPR/RC74.R5 on health innovation in which it endorsed the *Regional Health Innovation Strategy for the Western Pacific*. While health innovation has increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lack of comprehensive evidence and evaluation mechanisms have hindered informed policy-making on public health innovation, sometimes allowing economic concerns to take precedence over the well-being of populations. The Strategy addresses those concerns by providing guidance to Member States in developing health innovations that prioritize well-being and equity, fostering public-private partnerships to drive innovation, and demonstrating how multi-stakeholder collaboration can lead to fresh approaches that improve population health. Member States were urged to adapt the Strategy's objectives and actions to their unique national contexts, to foster cross-societal collaboration for health innovation at all levels and to ensure adequate resources for implementation. Member States also called on the Regional Director to disseminate the Strategy, to provide technical support, to facilitate stakeholder collaboration and to report on progress in health innovation in the Region.

### **Health workforce**

The Regional Committee adopted resolution WPR/RC74.R6 on the health workforce in which it endorsed the *Regional Framework to Shape a Health Workforce for the Future of the Western Pacific*. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed critical gaps in the distribution, quality and performance of health workers, and in the protections afforded them. Increasing numbers of health workers in the Western Pacific Region had migrated abroad or left the profession altogether in search of better working conditions. As a result, Member States sought guidance and support in building a more motivated and competent health workforce – consisting of the right numbers of people, in the right places and with the right mix of skills – as a central component of a well-performing and resilient health system and a foundation for achieving universal health coverage. The Regional Framework was welcomed as a guide to strengthen the health workforce according to each country's context, capacity and priorities. Member States requested the Regional Director to provide technical support for Member States to develop and implement national policies and plans in line with the Regional Framework, to facilitate collaboration and sharing of knowledge, experiences, lessons and innovations to address health workforce challenges, and to report periodically on progress in the implementation of the Regional Framework.

### **Governance reform**

The Regional Committee adopted decision WPR/RC74(1) on governance reform. Among other actions, the decision addressed gaps in governance in the Western Pacific Region and adopted amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific to increase clarity, accountability

and transparency, and to better align the Regional Committee's Rules of Procedure with those of other WHO governing bodies.

**Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction:  
Membership of the Policy and Coordination Committee**

In decision WPR/RC74(2), the Regional Committee selected China to nominate a representative to serve on the Policy and Coordination Committee for a term of three years from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026.

**Allocation of Executive Board seats**

The Regional Committee adopted decision WPR/RC74(3) requesting the incoming Regional Director to prepare options for the equitable distribution of Executive Board seats allocated to the Western Pacific Region, taking account of a formula proposed by the former Regional Director in consultation with Member States in October 2019, as well as geographical distribution, equitable and rotational representation among middle- and high-income countries, and examples of best practices from other WHO regions and/or United Nations organizations. Member States also requested the Regional Director to consult with the Region's Member States prior to the seventy-fifth session of the Regional Committee on those options and to include (under the item on the Coordination of the Work of the World Health Assembly, the Executive Board and the Regional Committee for the seventy-fifth session of the Regional Committee) a proposal on the equitable distribution of Executive Board seats allocated to the Western Pacific Region for consideration by the Regional Committee at its seventy-fifth session in 2024.

**Time and place of the seventy-fifth and seventy-sixth sessions of the Regional Committee:**

The Acting Regional Director said that the Regional Office was in discussions with the Government of China concerning the possibility of holding the seventy-fifth session of the Regional Committee in China, with 21–25 October 2024 as the suggested dates. Should that not be possible, the seventy-fifth session would be held at the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific in Manila, Philippines, on those dates.

If the seventy-fifth session were held in China, then the seventy-sixth session of the Regional Committee would be held at the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific in Manila, with the suggested dates of 20–24 October 2025. If the seventy-fifth session could not be held in China, Member States were invited to submit expressions of interest for hosting the seventy-sixth session, on the assumption that the seventy-fifth session would take place at the WHO Regional Office in Manila.

The Acting Regional Director would continue discussions with the Government of China and inform Member States of any arrangements via a note verbale in due course.

**Submitted by:**

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Date