

Seventy-first session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, Doha, Qatar, 14–17 October 2024

Report by the Chair, H.E. Dr Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari, Minister of Public Health of Qatar

INTRODUCTION

The 71st session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean was held in Doha, Qatar, on 14–17 October 2024 as an in-person meeting.

PART 1: TOPICS FOR GLOBAL DISCUSSION

Draft proposed programme budget 2026–2027

The Regional Committee received an overview on the Programme Budget for 2026–2027, including from a regional perspective. Member States discussed regional and country priorities, the implementation and assessment of activities, and the role of Member States in determining the distribution of regional and country budgets. Member States were asked to consider the proposed increase of assessed contributions and different options regarding the budget for emergency operations and appeals.

Investment Case 2025–2028 and latest on the WHO Investment Round

The Regional Committee received a presentation on the WHO Investment Case 2025–2028 and the latest on the WHO Investment Round. Member States discussed engaging the private sector in the investment round.

Nomination and appointment of Regional Directors: review of the process for the election of Regional Directors

The Regional Committee received a presentation on the review of the process for the election of Regional Directors.

Review of the draft provisional agenda of the 156th Session of the WHO Executive Board

The Regional Committee received a presentation on the draft provisional agenda of the 156th Session of the WHO Executive Board.

Other topics for global discussion

The Regional Committee received a presentation on resolutions and decisions of regional interest adopted by the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly and the Executive Board at its 154th and 155th sessions. These issues included: WHA77.1 on the Fourteenth General Programme of Work, 2025–2028; EB154(1) on sustainable financing: WHO investment round; WHA77.3 on strengthening mental health and psychosocial support before, during and after armed conflicts, natural and human-caused disasters and health and other emergencies; WHA77.5 on accelerating progress towards reducing maternal, newborn and child mortality; WHA77.8 on strengthening health emergency preparedness for disasters resulting from natural hazards; WHA77.9 and EB154(11) on the Global Health and Peace Initiative; WHA77.12 and EB154(13) on strengthening health and well-being through

sport events; WHA77.14 on climate change and health; WHA77.17 on strengthening preparedness for and response to public health emergencies through targeted amendments to the IHR (2005); WHA77(20) on the INB to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response; WHA77.16 and WHA77(18) on the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan; WHA77.15 on Palestine's participation in WHO governing bodies' matters aligned with its participation in the United Nations; WHA77.7 and EB154(10) on strengthening laboratory biological risk management; and WHA77.13 on the economics of health for all.

Representatives requested technical support from WHO for implementation of the resolutions and decisions and in relation to the regional positions on the amendments to the IHR (2005) and the INB process.

PART 2: TOPICS OF REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Regional strategic operational plan, 2025–2028 and regional flagship initiatives on expanding equitable access to medical products, investing in a resilient health workforce, and accelerating public health action on substance use¹

The Regional Committee received an overview of the regional strategic operational plan, 2025–2028, and the Regional Director's three flagship initiatives on expanding equitable access to medical products, investing in a resilient health workforce, and accelerating public health action on substance use. The Committee reviewed and endorsed the strategic operational plan and reviewed and approved the three flagship initiatives.

Addressing the increasing burden of trauma in humanitarian settings in the Eastern Mediterranean Region²

The Regional Committee received a presentation on addressing the increasing burden of trauma in humanitarian settings in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Recognizing the particularly heavy and distinct burden of physical trauma in the Region, and the role of efficient, accessible and quality trauma and emergency care services in reducing morbidity and mortality associated with acute injuries and conditions, the Committee endorsed the regional operational framework for trauma care in humanitarian settings.

Promoting collaborative action to accelerate the response to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region³

The Regional Committee received a presentation on promoting collaborative action to accelerate the response to antimicrobial resistance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Noting that AMR threatens health, health systems and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and concerned that the Region has the highest and most rapidly rising levels of antibiotic consumption of any WHO region, the Committee endorsed the regional people-centred collaborative approach to addressing AMR by building resilient health systems for universal health coverage and health security.

¹ [EM/RC71/R.1.](#)

² [EM/RC71/R.3.](#)

³ [EM/RC71/R.4.](#)

Regional action plan for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, 2024–2030⁴

The Regional Committee received a presentation on a regional action plan for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies, 2024–2030. Concerned about the increasing unmet mental health and psychosocial support needs of people affected by emergencies in the Region, and acknowledging that mental health and psychosocial well-being are critical to the survival, recovery and daily functioning of people affected by emergencies, the Committee endorsed the regional action plan.

Enhancement and digitalization of health information system in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region: a regional strategy, 2024–2028⁵

The Regional Committee received a presentation on the enhancement and digitalization of health information system in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region: a regional strategy, 2024–2028. Noting that health information systems generate data for measuring progress towards universal health coverage and the health-related SDGs and monitoring the impact of WHO's work at country level, but recognizing that many national health information systems in the Region face major challenges, the Committee endorsed the regional strategy.

Application from the Russian Federation to attend Regional Committee sessions in an observer capacity⁶

The Regional Committee reviewed and approved a request to invite the Russian Federation to attend future sessions of the Committee in the capacity of an Observer, with no voting rights, starting in 2025.

Other topics of regional significance⁷

The Regional Committee reviewed and adopted the annual report of the Regional Director on the work of WHO in the Region for 2023 and received progress reports and updates on various areas, including (among others) emergencies, polio and the WHO transformation agenda in the Region. The Committee welcomed the progress across a wide variety of programme areas, but noted with concern the many gaps and challenges that remain, the background of escalating conflicts in the Region and the serious harm they are causing to health, health care systems and critical infrastructure.

The Committee also: supported a new strategic framework for implementation of the Immunization Agenda 2030 in the Region; endorsed a regional strategy to strengthen local vaccine production; endorsed a strategic framework for strengthening health laboratory services in the Region, 2024–2029; and extended the mandate of the High-level Ministerial Group on the Control of Tobacco and Emerging Tobacco and Nicotine Products for another two years, to 2026, and expanded membership of the Group to include 10 Member States.

⁴ [EM/RC71/R.5.](#)

⁵ [EM/RC71/R.6.](#)

⁶ [Decision No. 7 of the Regional Committee at its 71st session.](#)

⁷ [EM/RC71/R.2.](#)