

Title: Seventy-seventh Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, Delhi, India, 7–9 October 2024

Subtitle: A summary report by the Chair, H.E. Mr Jagat Prakash Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India

Introduction

The Seventy-seventh Session of the WHO Regional Committee for SE Asia was held in person for a reduced duration of three days. The Committee adopted special procedures for the conduct of the Session vide decision SEA/RC77(1)¹, agreeing to take up four agenda items for noting under a written silence procedure and a temporary suspension of Rule 19 related to the adoption of the report of the Session.

Two Vice-Chairpersons were elected: H.E. Lyonpo Tandin Wangchuk, Minister of Health of Bhutan, and H.E. Dr Elia Antonio de Araujo Dos Reis Amaral, Minister of Health of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Mr Tashi Penjor, Chief Planning Officer, Ministry of Health of Bhutan, chaired the Drafting Group for resolutions and decisions. Dr S. Sridharan, Deputy Director-General (Planning), Ministry of Health of Sri Lanka, was Rapporteur. The Committee adopted two decisions and four resolutions.

Part 1: Topics for global discussion

- **Programme Budget performance assessment 2022–2023 and implementation of Programme Budget 2024–2025**

The Committee was updated on the programmatic and financial implementation of the Programme Budget 2022–2023 in the Region based on the end-of-biennium assessment and the progress of the implementation of the Programme Budget 2024–2025 during the first eight months of the current biennium (January–August 2024). The Committee welcomed regular joint monitoring at the country level and joint end-of-biennium performance assessment of the Programme Budget 2024–2025.

- **Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW14) 2025–2028 and Proposed Programme Budget 2026–2027**

The Committee was updated regarding the joint outcome prioritization conducted at the country level to develop the Draft Programme Budget 2026–2027 to be presented to the 156th Session of the Executive Board in February 2025 and Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly in May 2025.

The Committee noted that the total draft Proposed Programme Budget 2026–2027 for the Region is US\$ 575.9 million (scenario 1) and US\$ 640.2 million (scenario 2) based on the proposal for the Emergency Operations and Appeals segment. The proposed Base segment of the Programme Budget in 2026–2027 is US\$ 537.2 million. This is an increase of US\$ 49.9 million (10%) over the Base segment in 2024–2025, which is mainly in technical country capacity strengthening (US\$ 31 million), data and innovation (US\$ 8.4 million) and enhanced accountability (US\$ 10.5 million). It was noted that the Regional Roadmap for Results and Resilience (the ROADMAP), a blueprint for a “healthier South-East Asia Region in the next five years”, is in alignment and contributes to the global

¹ <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/379251/Decisions.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

priorities and targets. Member States proposed "Scenario 1" for the Emergency Operations and Appeals segment, considering the current capacity and projected future needs of the Region.

- **Sustainable Financing: WHO Investment Round**

The Committee was provided an update on WHO Investment Round including Secretariat's two-pronged approach: increasing Assessed Contributions and the launch of the first Investment Round along with the Investment Case (launched during the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2024). The Committee was informed that the Investment Round is supported by a growing number of co-hosts and champions and will culminate in a G20 pledging event in Brazil in November 2024.

Bangladesh noted its substantial support to WHO to the amount of US\$ 21 million in 2018–2024 and assured of increasing Assessed Contributions. India noted how it consistently fulfilled its Assessed Contributions, has increased it and provided funding to polio, cancer and other UHC-related areas, including traditional medicine. India is the top contributor in the Region and has also initiated a digital health initiative for digital public health infrastructure.

Indonesia informed that it had hosted a joint meeting of ASEAN finance and health ministers and was pleased to join the steering committee of co-hosts to enable the Organization to reach its goal of saving 40 million lives. Timor-Leste became the first Member State to pledge US\$ 1 million to the Investment Round. Other Member States welcomed the Investment Round and expressed their support.

- **Review of the Draft Provisional Agenda of the 156th Session of the WHO Executive Board (written silence procedure)**

The Committee noted the draft Provisional Agenda of EB156 and the last date for sending the proposals. The Government of India, while drawing attention to Item 7 of the Draft Provisional Agenda, suggested that a holistic approach focusing on metabolic causes will be more effective for addressing NCDs and proposed a modification to the first bullet of item 7 as "Reducing the burden of noncommunicable diseases through strengthening prevention and control of diabetes and other metabolic diseases" (addition of "and other metabolic diseases"). The Royal Thai Government informed the Committee on submission of an additional Agenda item on addressing the burden of leptospirosis, a disease significantly impacting vulnerable populations in flood-prone areas. The Committee supported these two submissions.

- **Membership in the Region**

Reference was made to the letter from H.E. Mr Budi Gunadi Sadikin, Minister of Health, Indonesia, dated 3 June 2024, addressed to the WHO Director-General, conveying the request of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to transfer its membership of the Organization from South-East Asia to Western Pacific Region. During deliberations, Indonesia, highlighting the reasons for its decision, thanked all Member States for their views on the subject and reiterated its decision, albeit valuing its long collaboration here. It requested the Secretariat to facilitate this proposal at the World Health Assembly in 2025. Member States (including Bhutan, DPR Korea, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste), considering the continued partnership of over seven decades, requested Indonesia to reconsider its decision and Bangladesh requested to keep the decision in abeyance till the

next Regional Committee in 2025. However, Indonesia reaffirmed its wish and requested the consideration of its request at the World Health Assembly in 2025. Nepal stressed that continued partnership in SE Asia is vital in ensuring progress of the Region. Recognizing Indonesia as a valued member of the Region, Maldives respected Indonesia's decision and sovereignty. The Secretariat was requested to note the observations of the Member States and include them in the report.

- **Consultations related to the positions of WHO Directors-General and Regional Directors**

The agenda item covered two decisions adopted by the WHO Executive Board related to the WHO leadership positions which mandated Member States to discuss these during or on the margins of the Session.

- a) **Decision EB154(14) – Process for the nomination and appointment of Regional Directors** – The legal counsel shared a brief overview including progress so far and actions expected from Regional Committees. The Committee supported the proposed measures and welcomed the establishment of an evaluation group to assess the suitability and qualifications of candidates for the position of the Regional Director.
- b) **Decision EB155(12) – Process of handling and investigating potential allegations against WHO Directors-General** – Discussions for this sub-item was led by Member State Co-Leads, Mr José Acacio from the Permanent Mission of Australia to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva; and Mr Ding Yang from the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva and Switzerland.

Part 2: Topics of regional significance

- **Ministerial Roundtable on adolescent-responsive health systems:**

This Session was Chaired by H.E. Dr Elia Antonio de Araujo Dos Reis Amaral, Minister of Health for the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. A resolution (SEA/RC77/R1)² endorsing the Ministerial Declaration on adolescent-responsive health systems was adopted by the Committee.

- **Expansion of the South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund (SEARHEF):** The Committee was updated on the implementation of SEARHEF and the outcome of detailed analysis of SEARHEF utilization, needs and gaps. The Committee, through resolution SEA/RC77/R2³ endorsed the recommendations of the High-Level Preparatory Meeting in September 2024 to increase the corpus of the SEARHEF to US\$ 3 million, from 2026–2027 biennium, to roll over unspent balances, and to merge the Response Stream and Preparedness Stream for improved efficiency.
- **Annual report on monitoring progress on UHC and health-related SDGs:** The ninth annual report⁴ on monitoring progress towards achieving UHC and the health-related SDGs in the Region was presented to the Committee. The latest available data and evidence clearly show that progress towards UHC and the health-related SDGs in the

² [sea-rc77-r1-eng.pdf](#)

³ <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/379254/sea-rc77-r2-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

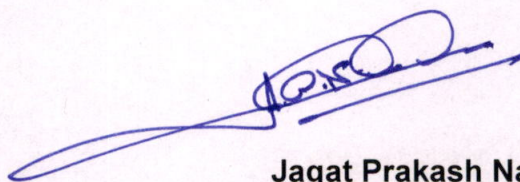
⁴ [9789290229636-eng.pdf](#)

Region remains uneven, which could partially be attributable to an incomplete recovery from the pandemic's impact. Member countries were requested to identify gaps and develop evidence-based interventions to address these for better health outcomes through the life-course.

Noting the recommendations of the Regional Consultation on re-setting the target date for achieving measles and rubella elimination (March 2023) and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Regional Immunization Technical Advisory Group meetings (September 2023 and August 2024, respectively), the Committee adopted a resolution SEA/RC77/R3⁵ urging Member States to aspire for achieving their elimination in the Region by 2026. The Committee also endorsed the "Strategic Plan for measles and rubella elimination and sustenance in the WHO South-East Asia Region 2024–2028"⁶.

- **Time and place of future sessions of the Regional Committee**

The Committee welcomed the invitation from Government of Sri Lanka and **decided** to hold its Seventy-eighth Session in Sri Lanka on 14–17 October 2025. The Committee also welcomed the invitation from Timor-Leste to hold its Seventy-ninth Session in Timor-Leste in October 2026. Decision SEA/RC77(2)⁷ was adopted on this.



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⁵ [sea-rc77-r3-eng.pdf](#)

⁶ [9789290229476-eng.pdf](#)

⁷ [Decisions.pdf](#)