

Committee A - Agenda items:11.1 and 11.2

Eastern Mediterranean Region Statement: Lebanon

Universal health coverage; Follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases

Dear Chair, Director-General, distinguished delegates,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region and would like to thank the Director-General and the Secretariat for the presented reports and the extensive efforts put forward in the triple billion targets. However, following up the work of WHO till 2023, while we feel proud to have achieved the one billion healthier populations, we are saddened but not surprised to learn that global progress towards universal health coverage (UHC) has stagnated in recent years, while the incidence of catastrophic health expenditure has increased. By the fact that the “healthier populations” billion was achieved while the other two targets lagged behind tells a lot about the fact that investing in prevention is a lot more rewarding. Unfortunately, the escalating situation of emergencies in the world coupled with economic crises is prevent any improvement in financial protection.

Service coverage in our Region remains well below target: one person in every eight faces financial hardship to get the health care they need, and the situation is even worse in the many fragile, conflict-affected and vulnerable countries and territories in the Region.

With that context in mind, enhancing health system resilience to improve both UHC and health security, has become a major area of focus for us. In order to accelerate action, expand access and ensure equity, the Regional Director is leading three flagship initiatives that focus specifically on accelerating control of substance use, investing in a resilient health workforce, and securing equitable access to quality medical products and supply chains.

Ladies and gentlemen, we believe that strengthening emergency, critical, and operative (ECO) care needs to be a central aim of every country’s work on defining and providing essential services. We therefore welcome the proposal to develop a global EOC strategy and action plan.

We also welcome and commend the Secretariat’s ongoing efforts to monitor progress in tackling noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

In this area, too, we note with concern that we are not on course globally or regionally to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 3.4: reducing premature mortality from NCDs by a third by 2030.

Member States are working hard with WHO’s regional team to turn the situation around having the reduction of risk factors as a major area of focus. To that end, there has been some encouraging progress in integrating NCD services into primary health care through enhancing surveillance, and improving cancer screening and management. In addition, many countries have introduced tougher tobacco control measures, while some are taxing unhealthy foods that promote obesity.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region is also stepping up efforts to support mental health across the Region. Thus, in addition to the Regional Director's flagship initiative to tackle substance use, a new regional action plan for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies is being developed.

Chair,

Though all WHO Member States, in the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond, have made important commitments on UHC and NCDs, the achievements show that there is so much more left to do. So, in a spirit of solidarity, let us all work together to meet those commitments.

Thank you.