



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Address by

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to the

THIRD MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

ON HEALTH TECHNOLOGIES

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Regional Office in Egypt on this important occasion. Let me start by welcoming health technology experts, whom I thank for their continued interest and support in our health technology programme. I would also like to welcome our colleagues from WHO headquarters and other regional offices.

Dear Colleagues

Health technologies, in particular medical devices, are considered to be crucial for the services offered in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of illness and disease. Every day, thousands of different kinds of medical devices are used in health care facilities and elsewhere all over the world. Most are quite simple, while others are complex and combine different technologies.

According to recent estimates, the global medical device market is worth over US\$ 200 billion and is expected to grow steadily by 4% to 5% annually over the next few years, implying

that this technological revolution in health will continue in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, at the same time that the regional market for medical devices is growing, the majority of the world's population is denied adequate, safe and reliable access to appropriate medical devices within their health systems.

Dear Colleagues

Since the Declaration of Alma-Ata in 1978, WHO has highlighted the importance of appropriate technology and has called for better standardization of health and medical technologies. WHO launched a global action plan on management, maintenance and repair of medical equipment, promoted affordable basic medical devices such as the Basic Radiology Systems and the World Health Imaging System for Radiography, and held several meetings in different regions related to health care technology management, selection and development. These provided a useful foundation and reference for health care technology policy formulation and implementation.

Inspired by the Alma-Ata Declaration, the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean has produced two landmark regional resolutions, on appropriate health technologies in 1997, and on the role of medical devices in contemporary health care systems in 2006. In the second resolution in particular, Member States are called upon to collect, update and verify information on medical devices, develop national plans that promote appropriate medical technology, and establish regional centres of excellence in medical technology.

In May 2007, the 66th World Health Assembly produced a similar resolution on medical devices which emphasized the need for Member States and donors to contain the burgeoning costs of medical devices by establishing priorities in the selection and acquisition of health technologies, in particular medical devices, on the basis of their impact on the burden of disease, and to ensure the effective use of resources through proper planning, assessment, acquisition and management.

Dear Colleagues

The objectives of this meeting are to explore the associated regional and global challenges and propose ways for Member States to overcome them. In your deliberations, you should aim at developing pragmatic solutions to increase access to health technologies while containing costs and management inefficiencies.

The tools necessary for building national health technology programmes have been developed by experts and were presented in the first two meetings of this technical advisory group, held in Geneva and Rio de Janeiro in 2009. The current meeting aims to provide Member States with a roadmap on how to properly manage medical devices using the tools developed. There is a need to update the data available, improve knowledge and information in this area, develop regional guidelines on medical devices selection, utilization and assessment, and identify regional centres of excellence.

The majority of countries still do not recognize management of devices as an integral part of public health policy. Member States used to develop policies for management of medical devices and technologies – through actual needs assessment, adequate procurement, proper installation, enough spare parts, preventive and corrective maintenance, rational usage and quality assurance – so that health care providers can reap their benefits and contain their burgeoning costs.

Dear Colleagues

I firmly believe that these goals are within reach, provided that we ensure that all the required ingredients are maintained. By this, I mean coordinating efforts, moving forward collectively and ensuring national commitment and the full support of partners. We have an opportunity; let us not miss it.

Finally, I would like to assure you of our unconditional support for promoting health technology management and innovation. This meeting is an essential building block in that direction. Once again, I would like to extend my thanks to all of you for your efforts, and for participating in this meeting. I wish you a fruitful discussion and a pleasant stay in Cairo.