In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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to the
INTERCOUNTRY WORKSHOP ON
GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) FOR MALARIA
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Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this intercountry workshop on geographic information systems (GIS) for malaria, in which you will review and discuss the present status of surveillance and collection of information on malaria in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and the appropriate strategies for data analysis.

Dear Colleagues,

In many malaria control programmes, collection, analysis, utilization and dissemination of surveillance data are inadequate. This situation is often compounded by the lack of standardization and poor means of communication. Approaches to data collection, verification, analysis and dissemination of surveillance information can now
be greatly improved through the introduction of customized information management and mapping applications called geographic information systems (GIS).

Dear Colleagues,

Recent advances in geographic information and mapping technologies have created new opportunities for public health administrators to enhance their planning, management and monitoring capabilities. These technologies can help planners better assess and analyse the spatial relationships of factors and constraints in the implementation of public health programmes.

The GIS can play a fundamental role in malaria control programmes. Information on the location of cases, coverage and utilization of different types of health care structures can be brought together with information on population settlements, migratory movements and environmental risk factors to obtain an accurate and detailed picture of the malaria epidemiological situation, providing decision-makers with a powerful planning base for management and monitoring of activities.

Dear Colleagues,

The public health professionals in developing countries, who are often in the best position to exploit information and mapping technologies, have in many cases been the last to receive the technology. This has mainly been due to lack of funding, lack of access to simple technology and lack of awareness of the opportunities that these technologies provide.

The objective of this first Regional workshop on GIS applied to malaria is to provide access to a simple, low cost management and mapping system developed by the HealthMapper unit in WHO.
The HealthMapper is a user-friendly geographic database and information management and mapping system designed specifically for public health applications. The system provides a common standardized platform for the convergence of disease-specific surveillance information and its analysis in relation to population settlements and surrounding social/health services and natural environment.

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that all the control programmes of communicable diseases in countries of our Region, including the malaria programmes, will introduce computerized GIS for the design and management of surveillance systems. As all of you know, good surveillance, timely reporting and emergency preparedness is the backbone of an efficient control programme.

I look forward to receiving the results of your discussions, suggestions and recommendations, and I wish you successful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Cairo.