

*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

Address by

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to

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH RESEARCH (EM/ACHR)

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Colleagues,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) on the occasion of the Thirteenth Session of the Eastern Mediterranean Advisory Committee on Health Research (EM/ACHR).

This important gathering continues to guide the Regional Office in all its activities for the promotion of health research in our Region.

The main objectives of the Regional Programme of Research Promotion and Development are to strengthen national research capabilities and promote and coordinate research on Regional priority problems. WHO work starts and ends at country level; that is why EMRO gives top priority to supporting research promotion activities at that level. The Regional programme is developed as a synthesis of the country programmes and the Global programmes are, in turn,

developed as a synthesis of the Regional ones. That is why we are placing more emphasis on national rather than on intercountry activities.

We have a noble target which is HFA by the Year 2000. With this target approaching ever nearer, we have tried to channel most of our research promotion efforts towards increasing the research ability of Member States in finding solutions to those problems which still stand in the way of achieving HFA/2000; hence we have given much attention to health systems research.

Let me provide you with a brief follow-up of your last meeting. You will recall that at the Eleventh Meeting, held in Kuwait, you recommended the establishment of the Health Research Task Force. This group has so far paid visits to Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Follow-up visits to Kuwait and Pakistan have also been carried out to collect information on activities for implementation of the Task Force's recommendations. In addition to this, we have cooperated with Democratic Yemen, Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq in the preparation of plans of action for health research.

In the course of the present meeting, you will be discussing the reports of these visits, both the initial and the follow-up ones. I am looking forward to receiving your recommendations on the ways in which the Task Force should continue its efforts and how these efforts could best be organized and coordinated with those of the Global ACHR.

Research priorities in relation to food policies, nutrition and health have recently been given special attention. They were discussed at the last meeting of the Global ACHR in October 1986. I am sure you will agree with me that this is a very important area needing continued research. There are, however, people who believe that in this area we already know all that we need to know; they forget that the very application of existing knowledge in real life conditions in various situations calls for research - of the health systems type. I wish to emphasize in this regard that we have to concentrate on those problems that are really important in our situation, not the ones which may be fashionable in developed countries. Also, while we should give priority to research of the health systems type, we should not neglect basic biomedical research, particularly because, most of the time, there is no clear-cut dividing line between basic and applied research - what is basic research today will be applied research tomorrow.

Another subject of your discussions will be research needs for the enhancement of transfer of technology to developing countries, with special reference to health. This includes selection of appropriate technology and its adaptation to the prevailing conditions in each country or part of a country. There is a need for multidisciplinary research so as to identify existing social aspects in the communities and in order to ascertain ways of enabling services to become more effective in selecting, installing, operating and maintaining suitable technology for various types of services which the communities need.

Once every two years your Committee examines the progress of work in our Region of the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction; activities in this area are at a somewhat low level at present, and I am looking forward to your recommendations for their improvement.

Your Agenda includes the subject of accidents. Accidents constitute an important cause of mortality and morbidity in this Region. They are the most important cause of death in the age group 10-49. Although their prevention is largely beyond the terms of reference or the capacity of the health sector, the main burden does nevertheless lie on this sector. There is therefore great need for intersectoral collaboration and, consequently, for multisectoral research to identify causes of accidents in each country and discover ways to reduce this load as much as possible.

WHO's Special Programme on Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was formally established on 1 February 1987. It has developed a global strategy for AIDS prevention and control and has received the unanimous support of the Fortieth World Health Assembly. Basic biomedical research related to AIDS is being done in many laboratories and medical institutions all over the world. The research endeavours of the Special Programme on AIDS relate particularly to issues in social and behavioural areas. We have organized a Regional Consultation on Psychosocial Research on AIDS as relevant to this Region, and you will receive a report on this Consultation.

At the last two meetings of the EM/ACHR, you discussed the report of the Regional Scientific Working Group on Diarrhoeal Diseases Research which was always held before your meetings. This year, because of the change in the

policies of the Special Programme on Diarrhoeal Diseases, we decided to disestablish that Regional Scientific Working Group; however, the report of the activities of the Regional Office in relation to diarrhoeal diseases research will be presented to you in the course of your meeting.

I am looking forward to reading your report and your recommendations which, I would like to assure you, the Regional Office will, as always, make every effort to implement.

I wish you a successful meeting and may God guide you in your endeavours.