



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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to the

**CONSULTATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT AND NETWORKING OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
CENTRES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Manama, Bahrain, 19–21 December 2006

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the regional consultation on the Development of Guidelines for the Establishment and Networking of Educational Development Centres in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Her Excellency, Dr Nada Haffadh, Minister of Health of Bahrain for kindly agreeing to host this consultation and to the College of Health Sciences for providing every support. The theme of the meeting is well in line with the theme of World Health Day this year, and with the priority set by WHO for the coming decade on supporting health workforce development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The issue of human resources development in the health system is becoming more focused at global, regional and national levels. New challenges are emerging. These include the shortage of different categories of human resources; maldistribution both in skills mix and in geographic areas; the cost and difficulty of production and retention; and disruption to management and development of the health workforce caused by planning and coordination, migration and other problems. The national health systems in all countries need to make the best of their educational institutes to lead in this field. Educational development centres represent the first and major vehicle to address such problems.

Training of adequate and appropriate human resources for health is one of the major priorities in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Capable institutions, and centres of excellence within these institutions, are essential to achieve this goal. Such institutions are expected to introduce new approaches, train skillful trainers, plan, monitor and evaluate the educational programmes.

The history of the Regional Office's active involvement in this issue goes back more than 30 years to when WHO supported the establishment of the first teacher training centre in Shiraz Medical School during the early 1970s. During its short life span, and before being converted into a conventional local educational development centre, it successfully trained many trainers and medical educationists from different countries of the Region, who then became well known pioneers in establishing similar centres in their own countries. The educational development centres in Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan, Bahrain and some other countries are just a few examples. These and many other experts have been very helpful in supporting educational development activities and in introducing innovative approaches to health professions education.

During the past two decades several other countries and institutions have established similar units or centres. These have made noticeable achievements in many aspects, adding new dimensions to what was traditionally expected of the centres. These

include promoting continuing professional development (CPD) in health-related disciplines; and introducing new methodologies such as problem-based-learning (PBL); best evidence medical education (BEME), clinical presentation curriculum (CPC) and outcome-based education. In addition, some centres have shown the willingness and capacity for research. However, to date, only some have been designated to become WHO collaborating centres.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Up to now the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has supported three major regional meetings of this kind. The last one was held in May 1995 in Tunisia. All of the previous meetings provided valuable insight into the matter with very useful recommendations. However, a practical guideline on different aspects of these centres is still lacking.

There are still many questions to be answered. The specifications of educational development centres are not clear to everybody and there is no consensus regarding the requirements and criteria for their establishment. Also, there are no clear and user-friendly guidelines on generic core structure, functions and measures to sustain and further develop the centres.

There is no doubt that collaboration between different centres can be of mutual interest and can benefit human resources development in the whole region. The guidelines for these interactions and collaboration need to be developed. In addition, some of the previous definitions and recommendations need to be revised to cope with changes in health professions education.

The Regional Office realizes the important role of these centres in health professions education and fully supports their establishment, promotion, networking and collaboration. One recent development in this direction has been the establishment of a new technical unit: the Educational Development and Training Unit (EDT) which will focus, among other things, on activities in this area, in coordination with the Human

Resources Development and Nursing and Allied Health units, within the Division of Health Systems and Services Development.

It is expected that the consultants participating in this meeting, with their excellent and long experience in this regard, will come up with clear and practical guidelines in respect to the objectives of the meeting. I take this opportunity to thank you all for accepting this responsibility and look forward to receiving the outcome of your deliberations and recommendations. I hope this meeting will produce the guidelines for the future agenda of the Educational Development Centres in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and provide a road map for better collaboration and networking. The ultimate goal is to support all health professions educational institutes to establish at least a unit, if not a centre, in each institute operating in the countries of the Region.

I wish you every success in achieving the objectives of the meeting and a pleasant stay in the beautiful and hospitable Kingdom of Bahrain.