



Address by
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to the

**SECOND INTERCOUNTRY MEETING ON HEALTH TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT:
GUIDELINES ON ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAMMES WITHIN NATIONAL
HEALTH SYSTEMS**

Cairo, Egypt, 1–4 December 2014

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to start by welcoming the representatives of ministries of health and health technology assessment agencies who are attending this important meeting and contributing to the advancement of health technology assessment in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. Your participation here today reflects your commitment to ensuring the safety, quality, efficacy and effectiveness of the various health technologies circulating in the markets and used in health care.

Dear Colleagues,

The last several decades have seen great advances in health technology. Access to such technology can improve the quality of care, minimize delay in diagnosis and treatment, and contribute to longer healthy lives. However, advanced technologies also have the potential to promote irrational use, medical errors and higher expenditure. Policy-makers are constantly faced with decisions related to the choice of appropriate technologies in health. Their decisions should not be guided by intuition or by commercial interests but rather by a rational evidence-based approach. This gap is addressed by health technology assessment, which is the subject of this meeting.

Most countries in this region lack a well-developed health technology assessment structure, or function within their existing national health systems. It is our aim to see that such capacity is developed in all countries of the Region whatever their level of income or development. Indeed countries that lack resources are in perhaps the greater need of health technology assessment. If used well, it can contribute towards universal health coverage by informing policy-makers, providers and payers about rational use of technology and thus helping them to make informed decisions.

Dear Colleagues,

A year has passed since you all met in Tunisia to discuss the importance of health technology assessment in governance and decision-making and the possible ways to secure its endorsement as an integrated tool for routinely evaluating new and emerging health technologies. Your discussions resulted in a roadmap to be followed by Member States and the Regional Office to promote health technology assessment within your countries. The roadmap included many activities, such as: advocating for establishment of health technology assessment with political and financial commitments, mapping of existing national resources, collaborating with existing health technology assessment networks and international agencies, and developing a regional network for technical collaboration and information and knowledge sharing. Today, we meet again to discuss the implementation status of the roadmap in terms of achievements, bottlenecks, and next steps.

Before I set out the expected outcomes of this meeting, let me brief you on some important activities that have taken place since our last meeting. First, the World Health Assembly discussed the importance of health intervention and technology assessment in support of universal health coverage. Deliberations resulted in resolution WHA67.23 which urged Member States to consider establishing national health technology assessment systems, thereby encouraging its systematic utilization. Implementing the resolution in our region will require WHO to provide technical support to Member States to promote health technology assessment within existing national health systems.

Second, WHO conducted a survey which aimed at mapping existing regional and national resources for health technology assessment, including entities with no formal structure for assessment but with possible resources that could be used to establish such a structure in the near future. Over 50 national and regional entities performing health technology assessment or similar activities responded to the survey and the results will be shared with you.

Third, a regional network comprising yourselves as national health technology assessment champions, as well as experts from other agencies and international networks has been set up. The network aims at discussing challenges, sharing reports, responding to queries, and providing solutions to specific challenges associated with setting up programmes in countries. I believe all of you were invited to be members of this knowledge-sharing forum, which will be officially launched on the final day of this meeting.

Dear Colleagues,

After setting the scene and raising the awareness of Member States in the first meeting, this second meeting marks the start of the discussion with all participating stakeholders on how national health technology assessment programmes should be governed, managed and

implemented. WHO staff and experts from Canada, France, Islamic Republic of Iran, South Korea, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, and United Kingdom are here to demonstrate to you:

- appropriate use of health technology assessment in a country, matched against its capability, capacity and need;
- different sources of information and networks that can assist in enhancing existing capacities, finding and analysing information, and supporting decision-makers;
- barriers associated with the introduction of health technology assessment within existing national health systems and how to overcome them; and
- successful and unsuccessful country experiences that can guide other countries when initiating health technology assessment programmes within local settings.

You are key actors in defining both the possibilities and the limitations of what the Region can achieve and how. I am sure that this meeting will provide the opportunity to share and discuss topics of mutual importance. Following this meeting, I assure you that we will pursue the realization of national health technology assessment entities in every country in our region. I hope that this meeting will provide a valuable platform for addressing common issues, as well as providing clear guidance on how to institute health technology assessment programmes within your national health systems. Finally, I look forward to our future collaboration – and most of all to the benefits that will arise as a result. I wish you all a fruitful meeting and a pleasant stay in Cairo.

Thank you.