

Noncommunicable diseases, maternal and child health and coronavirus in the opening session of the Regional Committee



With a heavy agenda full of important health issues, and the features of a new health strategy in the Region, the 59th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean opened today, Monday 1 October 2012, at the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, with the attendance of their Excellencies Ministers of Health and Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General.

Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in his opening address stated that the current challenges in the Region are alarming and outlined his strategy for the coming five years. He noted that the tremendous movement for change in the Region the root causes of which lie in social inequity

Dr Chan referred to the existence of huge health problems in the Region, threaten both health and economies. Diabetes care, for example, consumes 15% of the overall health budget in some countries of the Region, while out-of-pocket expenditure accounts for 75% of the national health budget in the low-income countries and hurts the poor.

Chair 58th session handed over to elected chair

The session was headed by Dr Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al-Saidi, Oman Minister Of Health, and chair of the 58th Session of the Regional Committee. Dr Al-Saidi, in his opening remarks said that the tremendous changes in the Region showed that there is a great difference in the level of response to threats. While some

59th session online photo gallery

Photos of the 59th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean can be accessed at our online photo gallery at the following link: <http://www.emro.who.int/about-who/rc59/photo-gallery.html>

strong points were noted, many weak points need to be strengthened.

During the rest of the first day's sessions, WHO reform and the Annual Report of the Regional Director were discussed.

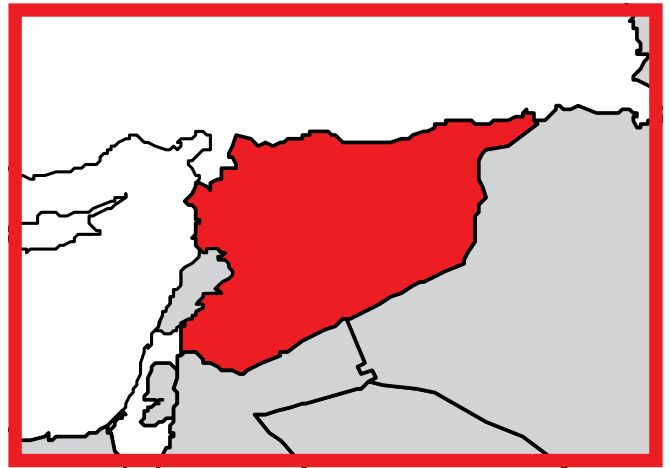
Syria

Dr Alwan referred to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic stressing that it is of acute concern as access to essential health care for hundreds of thousands of displaced people represents the difference between life and death. Dr Alwan said that more than 160 primary health care clinics are damaged, of which over 40% are out of service. Two thirds of 88 hospitals are damaged, while war has prevented WHO from taking the necessary relief measures.



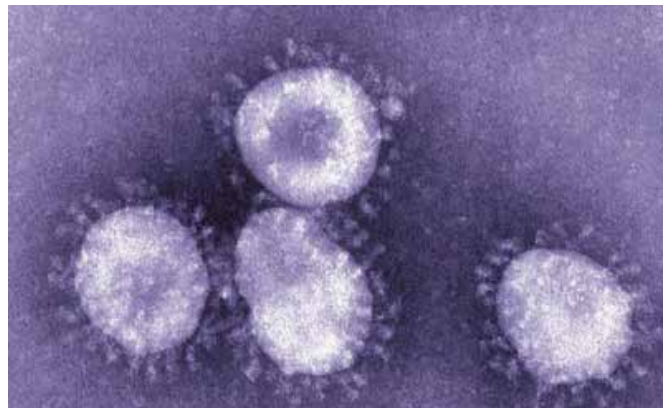
Corona virus

The novel coronavirus imposed itself on the opening speeches during the opening session. The Director-General and Regional Director confirmed that there is no evidence to date that the virus can



Polio

In her speech Dr Chan, who addressed the issue of Polio eradication in detail, warned that failure in eradicating polio could not be not accepted under any circumstances, and that any relaxation in handling this would lead to a setback.



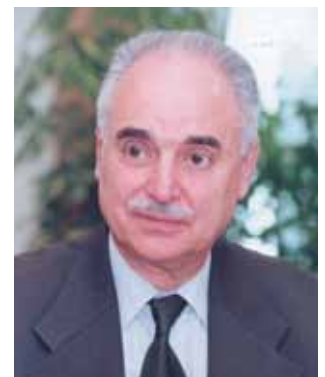
**Emergency
preparedness**

**Noncommunicable
diseases**

be transmitted from human to human or can cause any serious outbreaks. They both referred to the fact that the fast detection of the novel coronavirus and high vigilance all over the world demonstrated the ability of the International Health Regulations to improve global health security.

Saluting Dr Hussein Gezairy

Dr Ala Alwan, Dr Margret Chan and Dr Ahmed Ben Mohamed Al-Saiedi praised the historic leadership of Dr Hussain Gezairy, former Regional Director for WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.



Election of chair 59th sessions

Dr Bahr Idris, Minister of Health of Sudan, was elected as the Chair of the 59th session of the Regional Committee. The Ministers of Health of Kuwait and Tunisia were elected as vice chairs.



Awards ceremony

Award of the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Following the recommendations of the Foundation Committee, the Regional Committee at its Fifty-eighth Session decided to award the prize for 2012 in the area of cardiovascular diseases to Professor Dr Mohamed Mohsen Ibrahim, Egypt.

Award of the Dr A. T. Shousha Foundation Prize and Fellowship

Following the recommendations of the Dr A.T. Shousha Foundation Committee at the Fifty eighth Session of the Regional Committee, the Executive Board awarded the Dr A.T. Shousha Foundation Prize for 2012 to Dr Shaikha Salim Al Arrayed (Bahrain) for her significant contribution to public health in the geographical area in which Dr Shousha served the World Health Organization.

Dr Al Arrayed is being honoured for her significant contribution to public health in Bahrain, in particular the control of genetic diseases.

Maternal and
child health

Communicable
diseases

Health
systems

Award of the Down Syndrome research prize

The Down Syndrome Research Prize was established in 1999. Following the recommendations of the Down Syndrome Research Prize Committee the Regional Committee decided to award the prize for 2012 to Professor Dr Muneera Abdullah Al-Hussain, Saudi Arabia. Dr Souad Filmban received the award on her behalf.

Professor Dr Muneera Abdullah Al-Hussain is being honoured for her significant contribution to paediatric medicine in Saudi Arabia and her support for children with Down Syndrome and their families.



Highlights from Day 1



This bulletin was developed and designed by: MAC (Media and Communication unit) and GRA (Graphic Design and Layout unit)
For more information, please visit our website: www.emro.who.int