

Regional Committee BULLETIN

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Sixtieth Session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (RC60)

The first day of RC60 begins today, 28 October 2013, in Muscat, Oman, in the presence of Ministers of Health, their Representatives and delegates of Member States of WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region, representatives of national, regional and international organizations and agencies concerned with health and the WHO Secretariat.

The Committee will address important health issues representing priorities for the 22 countries of the Region. At the top of the agenda this year are maternal and child health, universal health coverage, road safety, environmental health, tobacco and polio eradication.



Conference hall ready to receive RC members



RC60 inaugural session, 27 October

The opening session of RC60 was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Ahmed Bin Mohamed Bin Obaid Al-Saidi, Minister of Health of Oman, H.E. Dr Abdellatif Mekki, Minister of Health of Tunisia, and Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. Her Royal Highness, Princess Muna Al-Hussain, WHO Patron of Nursing and Midwifery in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, delivered a keynote speech during the session.



Regional Director's Annual Report reviews progress in 2012

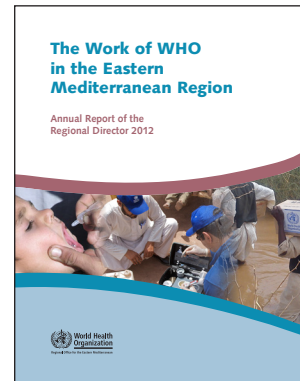
In 2012, much work was undertaken by Member States and WHO to improve health in the Region – a Region which

accounts for just 1.6% of global spending on health but 8% of the global population. With this gap in funding

for health it is evident that even more needs to be done to achieve further progress. *(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1) The Regional Directors' Annual Report for 2012 adopted a new approach in reporting on WHO's work at regional and country level, the report does not cover the work of the full range of WHO technical programmes but provides a snapshot of the major work being undertaken in priority areas. Each chapter of the report focuses on

one of the six strategic priorities for the Organization identified during a high-level expert meeting in March 2012. These areas are: strengthening of health systems for universal health coverage; promoting health across the life course; noncommunicable diseases; communicable diseases; emergency preparedness and response; and WHO management and reform.



The World Health Report 2013: Research for universal health coverage

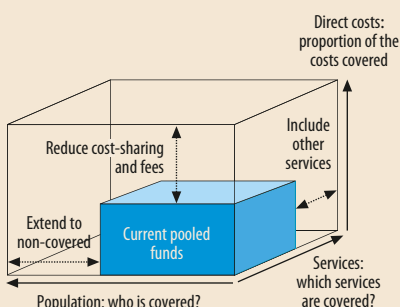
The World Health Report 2013 "Research for universal health coverage" argues that universal health coverage, with full access to high-quality services for prevention, treatment and financial risk protection, cannot be achieved without evidence based on scientific research.

The World Health Report 2013 calls for:

- increased international and national investment and support in research aimed specifically at improving coverage of health services within and between countries
- closer collaboration between researchers and policy-makers; research needs to be taken out of academic institutions and put under public health programmes closer to the supply of, and demand for, health services
- countries to build research capacity by developing a local workforce of well-trained, motivated researchers
- every country to develop comprehensive codes of good research practice
- establishment of global and national research networks to coordinate research efforts by fostering collaboration and information exchange.



Measuring progress towards universal health coverage in three dimensions



Why research is needed to achieve universal health coverage

Despite a multinational commitment to universal health coverage, there are many unanswered questions on how to provide access to health services and financial risk protection to all people in all settings. Currently, most research is invested in new technologies rather than in making better use of existing knowledge. Much more research is

needed to turn existing knowledge into practical application. Many questions about universal coverage require local answers in terms of structuring the health system, addressing health-seeking behaviours and measuring progress. All countries need to be not only consumers of research, but producers also.

The Regional Committee will discuss the roadmap and strategy to enhance universal health coverage in the Region. The road map lays out roles for Member States and WHO to achieve progress towards universal health coverage. A technical presentation highlights the

status in the Region where populations are divided into three groups in terms of accessing health services without incurring hardship resulting from out-of-pocket health expenditure. While Group one, mostly member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, enjoy

higher coverage and people pay less from their pockets on health, Groups 2 and 3 need to improve coverage rates and reduce out-of-pocket expenditure on health.

Award of the State of Kuwait Prize: process revisited

The eighth meeting of the Foundation Committee of the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean, which was held during RC59 in

October 2012 decided to review the nomination process and criteria for assessment of nominations, which were subsequently revised and endorsed by the Committee members. The revised criteria for assessment will be used by

the Foundation Committee in its ninth meeting during RC60. The presentation to the selected laureate(s) will be made during the Sixty-first Session of the Regional Committee in 2014.

Meet Richard Horton, Editor of The Lancet

One of the main figures addressing RC60 is Richard Horton, Editor of The Lancet, one of the world's leading medical journals. He will present The Lancet's views on public health in the Region.

The Lancet's prestigious heritage as one of the world's leading medical journals continues to inspire not only authors and editors today as they strive for medical excellence in all that they publish, but also for leaders of global health work.

Richard Horton (BSc MB FRCP FMedSci) was born in London

and qualified in medicine from the University of Birmingham in 1986. In 1990, he joined The Lancet as an assistant editor and moved to New York as North American editor in 1993. Two years later he returned to the UK to become Editor-in-Chief.

He currently chairs the Royal College of Physicians' Working Party on Physicians and the Pharmaceutical Industry; co-chairs a WHO Scientific Advisory Group on Clinical Trials Registration; is a Council Member of the Global Forum for Health Research; is a Board Member of the Health Metrics Network; sits on the



External Reference Group for WHO's Research Strategy; and is an External Advisory Board Member for the WHO European Region.

Polio eradication: achievements threatened by insecurity

Epidemiologically, wild poliovirus (WPV) transmission is at lowest recorded levels ever, with fewer cases in fewer districts of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Region's remaining endemic countries. No cases due to WPV type 3 have been recorded anywhere since April 2012.

However, these achievements are seriously threatened by security challenges that have been reducing access to children in several areas and that have claimed the lives of a considerable number of vaccinators, particularly in Pakistan and Nigeria.

Recently an outbreak of cases due to WPV type 1 was reported from Somalia. Yemen is also at high risk because of low population immunity and high population movement, resulting in the circulation of vaccine-derived polioviruses.

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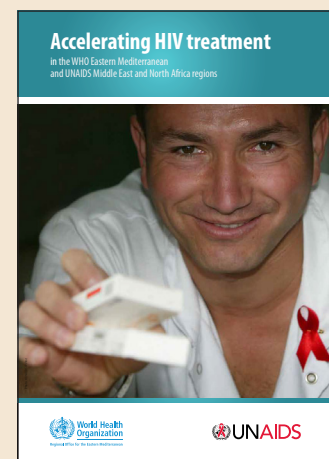
On the first day of RC60 countries eligible for support from the GAVI Alliance were briefed in a technical

side meeting on latest Board decisions and subsequent policies. The GAVI Board has agreed that the GAVI Alliance should play a lead role in the introduction of inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) into routine

immunization services in countries where GAVI currently works, as recommended by WHO and as part of polio eradication endgame strategic plan.

Regional initiative to end HIV treatment crisis

The expected outcome of the WHO/UNAIDS joint event on the regional initiative to end the HIV treatment crisis and launch of the report “Accelerating HIV treatment in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean and UNAIDS Middle East and North Africa regions” is to encourage political commitment towards the implementation of the initiative and the recommendations for action as outlined in the report in order to achieve regional treatment targets; encourage commitment to allocate additional domestic resources for HIV testing and treatment scale-up; and raise public awareness through media coverage of the initiative and plans to accelerate life-saving HIV treatment in the Region.



Implementing the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2020

The WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2020 was endorsed by all Member States during the 66th World Health Assembly in May 2013 (resolution WHA66.10). The resolution requested the Director-General to develop, in consultation with Member States, a limited set of action plan indicators and draft terms

of reference for a global coordination mechanism and to submit these, through the Executive Board, to the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly for approval. In light of these mandates, the WHO Secretariat developed a draft set of action plan indicators and draft terms of reference for the global coordination mechanism and seeks the input of Member States on the WHO



discussion paper on development of these indicators and the terms of reference for a global coordination mechanism.

Governments lose billions to illicit tobacco trade

Experts estimate that illicit trade accounts for more than one tenth of annual global cigarette sales, or about 600 billion cigarettes, and that illicit tobacco trade represents 11.6% of the global cigarette market. It is also estimated that at least US\$ 40.5 billion in tax revenue is lost by governments each year due to illicit trade in tobacco

products. It is not known how many illicit tobacco products are consumed in the Region. However, studies show that smuggling activities and illicit tobacco trade have existed in the Region for many years.

A protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products was adopted at

the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in November 2012. The Protocol is divided into articles specifying actions for Parties to take in order to control and eliminate illicit tobacco trade.