

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-fifth Session
Khartoum, Sudan, 15-18 October 2018**

October 2018

PANEL DISCUSSION

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 40th ANNIVERSARY of ALMA-ATA

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata, which identified primary health care as essential to attain Health for All. On 25–26 October 2018, the world will come together to renew a commitment to strengthening primary health care as part of efforts to achieve universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). That commitment will be expressed in a new Declaration. The 40th Anniversary Conference will emphasize the need to modernize primary health care and address current and future challenges facing health systems while maintaining the core values and principles represented in the original Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978.

Resolution WHA69.24 on “strengthening integrated, people-centred health services” and its framework were endorsed by the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in May 2016. The resolution urged Member States to implement the framework of action in line with each country’s specific context and priorities and make health care systems more responsive to people’s needs.

This was followed by the adoption of resolution EM/RC63/R.2 on “scaling up family practice: progressing towards universal health coverage” by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean at its 63rd session in October 2016. That resolution urged Member States to introduce the family practice approach in the provision of primary care services to advance towards universal health coverage.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata, a high-profile panel discussion on primary health care is being held alongside the 65th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Format of the panel discussion

The discussion will be moderated by Dr Zafar Mirza, Director of the Department of Health System Development of the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. It will start with a 30-minute question-and-answer session with panel members, followed by open questions from participants.

Key questions for panel members

Why did the Alma-Ata Declaration not lead to Health For All by 2000, despite its comprehensive approach?

In renewing our commitment to the Alma-Ata principles, what do we need to consider to strengthen primary health care and help to achieve universal health coverage and the SDGs?

What is the relationship between primary health care and universal health coverage?

What do we mean by primary health care based on family practice?

How should we decide what to deliver in primary health care?

How can we assure the quality of services in primary health care?

How can we convince countries to increase the budget allocated to primary health care?

Book launch

In addition, WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is launching a new book in collaboration with the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA). *Family practice in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: universal health coverage and quality primary care* will be of interest to policy-makers, health professionals, health educators and health profession students. It examines the challenges of and developments in nurturing family practice-based primary healthcare in the Region through a mixture of country-specific studies and Region-wide thematic chapters. The English version of the book will be launched at the meeting and made available to participants.

Panel members

Dr Ahmed Jan Naeem, Deputy Minister of Public Health, Ministry of Public Health, Afghanistan

Dr Mohsen Asadi Lari, Acting Minister for International Affairs, Islamic Republic of Iran

Dr Michael Kidd, Professor and Chair Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto, Canada

Representative of the International Federation of Medical Student Associations

Dr Omar Soliman, Regional Director Senior Advisor

Dr Siraj Ul Haq Mahmoud, represented Pakistan in the Alma Ata Declaration, 1978

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director, will deliver closing remarks