

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-sixth Session**

October 2019

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 14–17 October 2019

**STRENGTHENING PRIMARY HEALTH CARE IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
REGION BY IMPLEMENTING THE ASTANA DECLARATION – A PANEL
DISCUSSION IN COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF**

On 15 October 2019, a panel event on strengthening primary health care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region by implementing the Astana Declaration will be held in the presence of Dr Saeed Namaki, Minister of Health and Medical Education, Islamic Republic of Iran, and chaired by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, and Mr Ted Chaiban, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

The objectives of the event are to:

- achieve a common understanding of the progress made in operationalizing the Astana Declaration and the vision for primary health care in the 21st century;
- discuss the linkages between the Global Action Plan for Health and Well-being and the primary health care accelerator, and identify the key actions needed for scale-up in countries;
- apprise participants of good practices in strengthening primary health care in countries of the Region.

Background

In October 2018, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the 1978 Declaration of Alma-Ata, WHO and UNICEF joined with the Government of Kazakhstan to convene a global conference on primary health care in Astana, Kazakhstan. In the resulting Astana Declaration, Member States called for a renewal of primary health care, recognizing that elements of this approach now need to be aligned with the needs of populations living in the 21st century to respond effectively to ongoing and new challenges to health, and take advantage of new resources and new opportunities for success. Representing nearly 150 Member States, attendees came together to renew a commitment to placing primary health care at the heart of achieving universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

During a UNICEF regional meeting held in Muscat, Oman, in March 2019, WHO and UNICEF agreed to work together and to coordinate their efforts in a number of priority areas at both regional and country levels. This collaboration between UNICEF, WHO and other key partners has resulted in: the primary health care measurement and improvement (PHCMI) initiative to build national capacity for assessment-based primary health care improvements; a shared action framework that focuses on country implementation support to deliver more equitable, effective and efficient primary health care services for universal health coverage; a regional professional diploma in family medicine to improve the availability of well-trained family physicians; and a framework for action on effective engagement with the private health sector to expand service coverage.

Panelists

- H.E. Dr Ehmed Mohamed Ben Omer, Minister of Health, Libya
- Ms Noura Abdi Farah, Director of Studies, Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of Health, Djibouti
- Dr Fadi Kassis, Director of Primary Health Care, Ministry of Health, Syrian Arab Republic
- Moderators: Dr Anirban Chatterjee (UNICEF) and Dr Hassan Salah (WHO)