

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

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**STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF EMERGING AND
EPIDEMIC-PRONE INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
REGION**

Objectives of the event

The objectives of the event are to brief Member States on the:

- strategic framework for the prevention and control of emerging and epidemic-prone infectious diseases and the evidence gathered in order to define a long-term strategic approach to achieve disease control and elimination targets;
- priority activities to achieve disease control and elimination targets.

Background

Emerging infectious diseases pose a major and continuing public health threat in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region. The Region has been an epicentre for many emerging infectious diseases in recent years. Countries continue to face recurrent outbreaks from these emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, which have a significant impact on health and economic development. Over the past decade, the public health landscape of the Region has changed significantly as a result of these recurrent outbreaks.

At least 11 of the 22 countries of the Region regularly report major epidemics from emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases with the potential for global spread. Some of the major outbreaks reported in the Region in the past include: yellow fever in Sudan (2005 and 2012); Rift Valley fever in Sudan (2007); monkeypox in Sudan (2005); Crimean–Congo haemorrhagic fever in Afghanistan (2010, 2016, 2017) and Pakistan (2010, 2016, 2017), dengue fever in Yemen, Sudan and Pakistan (2012–2017); chikungunya fever in Yemen (2010–2011) and Pakistan (2017); and cholera in Iraq (2007, 2008, 2012 and 2015), Somalia (2007, 2010, 2015, 2016, 2017–2018) and Yemen (2016–2018). In addition, the emergence of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and its continuing transmission in countries of the Region (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates) since 2012 and avian influenza A(H5N1) human infections in Egypt, a novel influenza virus with pandemic potential, pose some of the biggest health security threats in the Region.

As a result of these recurring epidemic threats and the presence of multiple risk factors, the infectious hazard management programme of the WHO Health Emergencies programme has taken steps to strengthen regional and national capacities to detect, verify and control emerging infectious diseases with epidemic and pandemic potential. As such, the programme has developed an integrated strategic framework for the prevention and control of emerging and epidemic-prone infectious diseases in the Region for the next five years. The framework represents a road map to enhance the capacity of Member States to prevent, forecast, early detect and respond to epidemics and any other emerging health threats by promoting evidence-based interventions, guidance and best practices for the control and elimination of epidemic risks.

Challenges

The causes of the resurgence of emerging infectious diseases in the Region are many and complex, but the most important factors include ongoing conflict and political instability resulting in frail health systems, population movement, overcrowded urban centres, lack of clean water and adequate sanitation, increased international travel, major religious mass gatherings, deteriorating environmental conditions and weak public health systems. Infectious disease outbreaks do not respect international boundaries and pathogens can spread quickly in today's interconnected world, presenting a threat to all countries. Therefore, the need to prevent, detect and respond to any infectious disease that poses a persistent threat to regional and global health security remains a priority.

Expected outcomes

- WHO Member States briefed on the strategic framework for the prevention and control of emerging and epidemic-prone infectious diseases and the evidence which has been gathered to define a long-term strategic approach to achieve disease control and elimination targets.
- WHO Member States briefed on priority activities to achieve disease control and elimination targets.