

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-sixth Session
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 14–17 October 2019**

October 2019

UPDATE ON UNITED NATIONS REFORM

Objectives of the event

The objectives of the event are to:

- update Member States on United Nations (UN) reform;
- determine Member States' support of WHO's engagement in, and adoption of, UN reform and their level of commitment to joint efforts to elevate the strategic position of health within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formerly known as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)) and other country plans and strategies.

Background

The UN reform, approved by the United Nations General Assembly in May 2018, was launched by the UN Secretary-General to position UN agencies to be able to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Its main components include:

- repositioning of the UN Resident Coordinator;
- establishment of a new generation of UN country teams (UNCTs,) through a redesigned, strategic, flexible and results-oriented Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework;
- advancing common business operations, including common back offices and common premises;
- repositioning the work of the UN at regional level;
- enhancing the transparency and accountability of system-wide results through the UN Economic and Social Council and entity-specific governing bodies;
- stronger capacities for system-wide evaluations; and
- a funding compact to improve the quality and predictability of resources for the United Nations Development System.

Implementation started in January 2019, with key changes being made to the Resident Coordinator system and a push towards common and approved business operating strategies in several countries. There are examples of different approaches for interpreting the role of the Resident Coordinator as a leader of UNCTs, and some of these may impact WHO's work, including missions to countries, funding for programmes, mobilization of resources, and relations with government officials. Changes related to UN programming (in the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and other strategic frameworks) are forthcoming and may lead to health issues not receiving the attention they deserve. WHO at a global level is committed to the UN reform and several elements are integrated in WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work.

Challenges

The regional scope of UN agencies differs from that of WHO as other agencies either cover the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) or the Arab countries. Moreover, the heterogeneity of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in terms of size and economic development, as well as the situation of countries in crises, adds to the complexity of implementing UN reform in the Region. Health has not always

been well positioned in previous UNDAFs, and greater emphasis has sometimes been given to economic development and job creation. There may be pressure from the UN Resident Coordinator and the UNCT to emphasize certain programmes and to work with a variety of partners. The capacity and willingness of ministries of health in countries to coordinate, lead and influence the health programmes within the UN Cooperation Frameworks may be a determinant for the positioning of health within strategic plans.

Expected outcomes

- Assessment of Member States' support of WHO's engagement in, and adoption of, UN reform and level of commitment to joint efforts to elevate the strategic position of health within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and other country plans and strategies.