



**Address by**  
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**to the**  
**REGIONAL NURSING FORUM: THE FUTURE OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY IN**  
**THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**Amman, Jordan, 22–23 February 2015**

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellency, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this distinguished gathering and to welcome you to the Regional Forum on the Future of Nursing and Midwifery in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. It is a great honour for WHO to hold this meeting under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Muna Al Hussein, WHO Patron for Nursing and Midwifery, who has, over the years, been a keen and devoted supporter of nursing and midwifery nationally, regionally and globally.

Your Royal Highness, your presence in this debate on how to shape the future of nursing and midwifery in the Region in order to strengthen and sustain health and contribute to the acceleration of universal health coverage is greatly appreciated and valued.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to His Excellency Dr Ali Hyasat, Minister of Health of Jordan, for kindly agreeing to host this meeting.

The participation of nursing and midwifery leaders from other regions and international organizations will provide a great opportunity to discuss the situation of nursing and midwifery in the Region and to recommend appropriate actions to ensure provision of quality nursing and midwifery care to improve the health of our populations within these changing times.

This forum provides an excellent platform to learn about the good practices coming from global experience that we can make use of in transforming the future of nursing in the Region. The experiences, information and evidence that you can provide will enrich our understanding of the actions that we need to take to improve nursing and midwifery and to move towards universal health coverage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2012, the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean endorsed five strategic priorities for WHO's work with Member States: meeting the Millennium Development Goals for maternal and child health; addressing disparities in health care systems across the Region; tackling the escalating impact of the noncommunicable diseases epidemic; combating the ongoing and emerging health issues of communicable diseases, in particular health security; and improving mechanisms for countries to adequately prepare for, and respond to, emergencies. Addressing these priorities requires increasing numbers of competent and well prepared nurses and midwives.

Transforming nursing has been a high priority on my agenda since I took office as Regional Director in 2012. In 2013, Her Royal Highness Princess Muna honoured us with her presence at the consultation on nursing education to update the regional standards for nursing education and develop a framework for nursing specialization.

With the sociodemographic and epidemiological changes occurring in the Region, there is an urgent need to come up with innovative ways to organize nursing and midwifery services so as to ensure that people have access to a competent, regulated, well managed, and properly supported nursing and midwifery workforce.

Efforts to scale-up essential interventions to achieve the health-related Millennium Development Goals, universal health coverage and sustainable development goals provide a rallying point for all health professionals to deliver appropriate responses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The diverse situation in the Region entails different challenges for the Member States. Three broad groups of countries were identified by WHO, based on population health outcomes, health system performance (including health workforce situation) and level of health expenditure.

In our region the majority of countries have reported nursing shortages across most fields of practice settings. Poor working conditions, low levels of authority, insufficient reward and recognition and lack of career structure or professional progression structure all stand in the way of attracting new recruits and retaining nurses and midwives. Many countries have indicated that greater involvement of nurses and midwives in decision-making at all levels is being considered. While there is growing interest in professional regulation in the Region, progress remains slow.

These common challenges affect the majority of countries. However, each group of countries faces more specific challenges. For instance, group 1 countries, at the higher end of the income strata, face challenges relating to recruiting high school graduates to the profession and rely heavily on an expatriate workforce. Group 2 countries generally produce considerable numbers of nurses but, due to economic constraints, face deployment and retention challenges such as

dual practice and poor practice environments, with adverse consequences for coverage and quality of health care. Group 3 countries suffer the double burden of low production of nurses and midwives, high turnover rates and poor institutional capacity of educational institutions, leading to critical nursing workforce shortages.

To address such challenges, we need to define practical and feasible actions that are evidence-based and guided by reliable information and good practices. To prepare for the meeting, we conducted an online survey to review the status of nursing and midwifery and to identify challenges, in order to strengthen nursing and midwifery in countries. The survey included questions covering six areas of nursing and midwifery –human resources, education, practice, service, regulation and research. I am very pleased to note that most of the countries responded to the online survey questionnaire. The findings of this study and the results of other tools used to gather information will guide the deliberations and discussions during this meeting. The comprehensive situation analysis of the current status of nursing and midwifery in the Region will be discussed with you during this forum.

I hope by the end of this meeting we will: 1) agree on the priority challenges facing nursing and midwifery; 2) identify and suggest feasible, practical and appropriate solutions to tackle the obstacles that are impeding progress in nursing; and 3) reach consensus on the way forward and hopefully update the regional strategic directions for nursing and midwifery in order to guide action for nursing and midwifery resource and services development for the next 15 years, to 2030.

Your Royal Highness, Your Excellency, Dear Colleagues,

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the outcome of this forum will help us in providing a road map for shaping the future of nursing and midwifery in the Region. There is a great opportunity for the nursing and midwifery profession to contribute effectively to national, regional and global efforts to improve health and deliver quality, accessible, cost-effective care in a multitude of practice settings.

I wish you all every success in the forum and the challenges ahead of you. I look forward to receiving the final outcome of the meeting. I am sure that your stay in Jordan will be both productive and enjoyable.