



Address by

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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

to the

**INTERCOUNTRY MEETING ON GLOBAL ACCELERATED ACTION FOR
ADOLESCENT HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE:
OPERATIONALIZING THE ADOLESCENT HEALTH COMPONENT OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR WOMEN'S, CHILDREN'S AND
ADOLESCENTS' HEALTH 2016–2030**

Cairo, 20–21 March 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

I take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to this joint United Nations intercountry meeting on global accelerated action for adolescent health implementation guidance: operationalizing the adolescent health component of the UN global strategy for women's, children's and adolescents' health 2016–2030 that is taking place in the Regional Office today and tomorrow.

The purpose of this meeting is to support Member States in applying a systematic and comprehensive approach to promote adolescent health and development and lay the foundation for appropriate adolescent health programming in our Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you may be aware, the number of adolescents in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is around 125 million, constituting nearly a fifth of the region's population. Adolescents are an enormously diverse group, and yet, all over the world they share similar characteristics in their physical and mental developmental journey from childhood to adulthood.

In our region, the main causes of adolescent mortality are road traffic injuries, lower respiratory diseases, drowning, diarrhoeal diseases and self-harm. For adolescent girls in particular, maternal causes constitute the leading cause of mortality in this age group. Member States, with the support of UN agencies and other development partners, are urged to prioritize interventions to address the aforementioned issues.

The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, released in 2015, identifies adolescents for the first time as a key target population. The strategy addresses adolescent health and development across its three objectives: Survive, Thrive and Transform. It adopts a life-course approach that aims for the highest attainable standards of health and

well-being at every age and identifies 27 evidence-based interventions to improve adolescent health and development.

In response to the demands of Member States, the global accelerated action for adolescent health implementation guidance was developed in order to support countries to analyse policies and plans, and implement and monitor the response to the health needs of adolescents. Moreover, the implementation guidance facilitates the integration of adolescent health priorities in national plans in line with the UN global strategy.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the implementation guidance will boost national efforts to fulfil commitments made in 2015 through endorsement of Regional Committee resolution (EM/RC62/R.1), which urged Member States to “develop or update national reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child health strategic plans in accordance with the United Nations global strategy on women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health”.

In terms of the current humanitarian situation in the region, no improvement to adolescent health and development could be made without addressing the issues faced by adolescents in countries affected by complex emergencies. Specific measures are needed to reduce mortality and improve the well-being of emergency-affected populations. This area needs to be addressed in close collaboration with UN agencies and other humanitarian actors. Even countries not directly touched by the humanitarian crisis have an important role to play.

Ladies and gentlemen,

About a year ago, the leaders of all UN agencies in the Region endorsed the Regional Framework of Joint Strategic Actions for Young People 2016–2017. It is intended to facilitate the delivery of the UN common agenda in addressing the urgent needs of young people including adolescents in the region.

In the next two days, you will be updated on the key adolescent health elements of the global strategy and initiatives and how they are being operationalized at country level. It is a good opportunity to explore and share best practices and lessons learned by countries, while focusing on evidence-based and effective interventions for adolescent health. This meeting represents an important platform for capacity-building of national managers and their partners from UN agencies, NGOs and academic institutions.

I invite you all to get the maximum benefit from this meeting and transfer the knowledge and skills gained to your colleagues and senior officials at country level.

I wish you a productive and successful meeting.