



Address by

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to the  
**BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY FORUM**

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Your Excellency Mr Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon and Minister of Public Health

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking His Excellency the Minister of Public Health for inviting me to attend this important international forum. This forum has the potential to make an enormous contribution to advancing health technology in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. This is symbolized by your participation here and reflects your commitment to creating a modern health care environment that will benefit not only this beautiful country of Lebanon but the entire Middle East.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In low- and middle-income countries of the Region, 20–60% of the health budget is spent on medicines, medical devices, and other health technologies. Nevertheless, access to quality-assured, safe, reliable and efficacious health technologies is still a major challenge that needs to be addressed as it directly affects the ability of countries to achieve universal health coverage and the health-related targets of the SDGs. To improve access to these valuable resources, the WHO Regional Office is pursuing a strategy with four components:

1. Enhancing national capacities to adequately assess and prioritize health technology needs thereby making essential technologies available to the public;
2. Ensuring that health technologies produce maximum public health benefits at affordable costs;
3. Promoting health technologies that are scientifically valid, adapted to local needs, acceptable to both patient and health care personnel, and which can be utilized and maintained using affordable resources;
4. Strengthening regulatory functions for medical products by making stakeholders accountable for ensuring their safety, quality and efficacy.

The aims of this forum are in line with these objectives and all of the experts here today are being exposed to various ideas that can help to promote our regional efforts. You are key actors in defining both the possibilities and the limitations of what the Region can achieve and how.

Dear Colleagues,

The health care industry continues to grow and contributes to expanding access to health technologies. It not only improves access to essential medical products, but also helps – through research – in understanding how to create an adequate environment that will transfer the benefits of innovations and technologies to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. This forum can help in examining the challenges and the potential of the industry to address these challenges to ensure meaningful results for health systems. The forum also provides a platform for stakeholders to engage in fruitful discussion on topics of mutual importance, such as governance and policies, modernization of health care services, health financing and insurance schemes, health care innovation, local production and technology transfer, as well as regional readiness for the adoption of technology.

In today's world when governments are trying to improve the access of populations to decent health care, and universal health coverage has become an official global target to be achieved by 2030, partnership – transparent and accountable partnership – between governments and health industry is critical.

Dear Colleagues,

I am sure that this forum will provide clear guidance on how to advance health technologies in Lebanon and other countries of the Region. I am hopeful that discussion will result in the identification of a clear roadmap on how Lebanon can become a regional leader in this important industry. Finally, I look forward to our future collaboration in this field – and most of all to the benefits that will arise as a result. I wish you all a fruitful forum and a pleasant stay in this vibrant and beautiful city of Beirut.

Thank you.