



Address by
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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION
to the
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGIONAL CO-SPONSORS MEETING
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Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be with you today.

I would like to thank Dr Yamina Chakkar, Director of the UNAIDS Regional Support Team, for inviting me to address this important meeting of UNAIDS cosponsors in the Middle East and North Africa Region.

Dear Colleagues,

In the post Millennium Development Goals era, the United Nations has set the global targets of “90-90-90” for the year 2020, whereby 90% of people living with HIV know their HIV status, 90% of them are receiving treatment and 90% of those treated are virally suppressed. Almost one year ago, at the 69th World Health Assembly, WHO Member States adopted the Global Health Sector Strategy on HIV 2016–2021. The strategy is a framework for achieving those targets through a set of actions to be taken by the WHO Secretariat and Member States, all aimed at accelerating access to a continuum of HIV care.

In our region, the overall prevalence of HIV has remained low; however, HIV is still growing among key populations at higher risk. With more people becoming infected, more people need treatment. Most countries in the Region continue to increase access to lifesaving antiretroviral therapy. However, the increase is very slow and thus the regional coverage rate of antiretroviral therapy has not increased significantly. It remains at 14%, far from the global targets.

The biggest gap lies in the fact that the majority of people living with HIV in our region do not know their HIV status. The testing policies and service delivery approaches used in countries are not conducive to motivate people at risk to get tested. HIV test-treat-retain cascade assessments, conducted by the Regional Office in several countries of the region between 2013 and 2016, show that the proportion of people living with HIV who do not

know their HIV status varies between countries and ranges between 50% and 93% of all people living with HIV.

In this context and within the framework of the WHO Global Health Sector Strategy, the Regional Office will devote regional activities this year to promoting HIV testing. In terms of support to countries, my team will focus on the “fast-track countries” of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan to help reduce barriers to HIV, prevention, testing and treatment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the road to universal health coverage and achievement of global HIV targets, WHO places no limitations on eligibility for antiretroviral therapy among people living with HIV; all populations and age groups are eligible for treatment. I hope we can build on existing partnerships and find new beneficial ways to collaborate in reaching and providing treatment to all people living with HIV.

WHO has been working jointly with ministries of health, UNAIDS and its co-sponsor agencies, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS Tuberculosis and Malaria and various other international and national partners to facilitate and to foster the efforts of countries to scale up their response. WHO will continue its support to the countries of the region and remain firmly committed to supporting our countries to reach the global targets and to positively influence the lives of people living with HIV.

I wish you productive discussions in this important meeting.

Thank you.