

Address by

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to the

**21ST ARAB HEALTHCARE DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL FORUM
OF THE ARAB HOSPITALS FEDERATION**

Kuwait City, Kuwait, 10–11 April 2019

Your Excellencies and Eminent Scholars,
His Excellency Sheikh Dr Basel Hamoud Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Health of Kuwait,
Dr Tawfik Khoja, Secretary General of the Arab Hospital Federation,
Mrs Alice Yammine Boueiz, Chief Executive Officer of the Arab Hospital Federation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to be here with you in this outstanding forum meeting organized by the Arab Hospitals Federation.

“The right to health for all people” and universal health coverage (UHC) are two sides of the same coin. WHO’s focus on universal health coverage has gained new momentum and renewed commitment through our new global target of ensuring that at least 1 billion more people have access to essential health services by 2023 as a critical interim goal towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

For health care to be truly universal, a shift is required from health systems designed around diseases to health systems designed for people, with people. Ensuring integrated people-centred health services that offer universal access to quality services, social equity and financial protection, within a primary health care-led approach, is critical to achieving universal health coverage and the targets of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Hospitals in both the public and private sectors are an essential part of this ambitious agenda. They must be transformed. Hospital transformation at both system or policy level and hospital level entails new ways of integrating hospital services within the broader service delivery system, communities and social services; improving hospital management and performance; and creating an enabling environment.

A few countries in the Region have already started implementing hospital reforms and performance improvement projects. Transformation should be sensitive to the national and

local context, and different policy instruments may need to be used or adapted accordingly, to address the most pressing issues locally.

WHO continues to advocate for the strategic importance of hospitals within health systems in moving towards universal health coverage. In this regard, WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has developed a strategic framework for action for the hospital sector in the Region and we aim to assist our Member States to improve hospital care and performance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Health-care governance is a framework for improving the quality of care and access by increasing accountability and promoting openness and transparency to optimize outcomes and shared learning. Governance and accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened in order to build legitimacy and trust. Hospitals should give patients and their families a voice and be explicit about rights and entitlements and the need to plan based on the comprehensive health and service needs of the community. The new generation of hospitals have to adopt participatory governance mechanisms.

Hospitals are also costly components of a health system and depend on a wide array of resources in order to function effectively. There are extensive inefficiencies in the hospital sector in our Region caused by many different factors. They should be tracked consistently, and appropriate corrective actions need to be put in place. Improving the efficiency and productivity of hospitals could lead to large savings on health-care expenditure which could be devoted to other services such as prevention and promotion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

WHO is committed to supporting our Member States to improve hospital planning and management, in line with each country's aspirations for universal health coverage. WHO assistance includes policy advocacy and dialogue, technical collaboration in policy-making and implementation, and capacity-building for governments and hospitals.

I hope some of the key issues I have highlighted will be considered by decision-makers and hospital leaders. We need innovative approaches that not only target the challenges in our Region, but also consider local contexts and local solutions.

We look forward to further collaboration between WHO and the Arab Hospital Federation for further improvement of health care and health planning and management in the Region.

Let me thank you again for inviting WHO to this important meeting. I wish you fruitful discussions leading to lots of useful action.