

**WORLD HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION**

**Regional Office  
for the Eastern Mediterranean**



**ORGANISATION MONDIALE  
DE LA SANTÉ**

**Bureau régional  
pour la Méditerranée orientale**

EXED

**ADDRESS BY DR A. H. TABA  
DIRECTOR  
WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

at the opening session of the  
**COORDINATION GROUP MEETING ON MENTAL HEALTH**

Alexandria, 22 - 25 November 1978

I have the pleasure, on behalf of WHO, to welcome you all to this Regional Office and to thank you for your cordial collaboration and participation at this important mental health meeting.

Some of you may recall that in recent years we have organized two previous group meetings similar to this one. The first was in 1972 and the second one in 1976. In this connection, you will be pleased to learn that the ideas and recommendations emanating from these meetings have been generally helpful in providing valuable guidelines for the better development of mental health activities. Following the last meeting many countries, for example, expressed keen interest to review their mental health legislations and amend them along the proposed lines and in harmony with universally accepted practices.

Over the years, it is also clear that several countries in this Region have made serious attempts in order to develop mental health care. Nonetheless, the needs are increasingly growing and available national resources are generally inadequate to meet their needs. Indeed, in the wake of rapid socio-economic developments and the changing medical scene, mental health is now emerging into the forefront of public health problems. Yet, despite the significant developments which have been generally achieved in therapeutic modalities, there are still many questions regarding the nature and extent of mental illness which continue to be unanswered. Furthermore, due to shortage of qualified mental health personnel, inadequacy of psychiatric training

of general health workers and inappropriateness of psychiatric models, it has not been possible to utilize modern mental health technology for wide population coverage.

Because of this, your meeting has been designed with the view to examine the current mental health problems, define future objectives and strategy, discuss the difficulties encountered in national and regional programmes and draw up suggestions for future planning and programming. Apart from these general issues you will note that your agenda includes specific activities in a variety of areas in which some of you have mutually and collaboratively developed with WHO. I am confident that your distinguished group will competently discuss these specific topics dealing with training, extension of mental health care, mental health information and drug dependence.

Some of you have already participated in WHO Inter-Regional Workshop on Drug Dependence which was held last month in this Office and I feel happy on this occasion, to reiterate what I had previously stated, regarding the success of the Workshop. Your further contribution in this meeting to this topic should be usefully complementary to the previous one.

I sincerely believe that with your knowledge and experience and based on the exchanged views and available information, you will be able during this meeting to formulate appropriate proposals and draw up relevant recommendations which should form a practical framework for a viable and dynamic mental health programme.

I am sure you will be interested to learn that the Third Meeting for Global Mental Health Programme, which comprises all WHO Regional activities is scheduled to take place in this Office in September next year and hence the importance of your contribution in this meeting which will be given due consideration within the global context of the overall mental health programme.

With these ideas in mind, I wish you fruitful deliberations and successful discussions. I look forward, with interest and keenness, to the recommendations emanating from your distinguished Group.

Thank you.