

Message from

DR AHMED AL-MANDHARI

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

on the occasion of

WORLD ANTIBIOTIC AWARENESS WEEK 2018

Cairo, Egypt, 12 November 2018

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for joining us to celebrate World Antibiotic Awareness Week 2018.

World Antibiotic Awareness Week is an annual global campaign led by the World Health Organization (WHO) that aims to raise awareness regarding antibiotic use and encourage best practice among the public, policymakers, and health and agriculture professionals.

Antibiotic resistance is rising to dangerously high levels across the world, compromising the treatment of infectious diseases and undermining advances in health and medicine. It is caused by the misuse of antibiotics, inadequate hygiene practices and other factors, and can affect anyone, of any age, in any country.

Antimicrobial resistance threatens the achievements of modern medicine. Organ transplants, chemotherapy and even common surgery such as caesarean sections become much more dangerous without effective antibiotics for the prevention and treatment of infections. If we do not take action now, we may return to an era when even the simplest infections could lead to death.

Antibiotic resistance significantly adds to the cost of health care. When first-line antibiotics can no longer treat infections, more expensive medicines must be used. In addition, a longer duration of illness and treatment, often in hospitals, increases costs.

Without interventions to curb the spread of antibiotic resistance, it has been projected that by 2050, resistant infections will kill more people worldwide than cancer and result in global economic losses equivalent to those of the financial crisis of 2008.

Tackling antibiotic resistance is a high priority for WHO. Member States endorsed a global action plan on antimicrobial resistance in 2015.

Countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region likewise reiterated their firm commitment to fight antimicrobial resistance by signing a resolution on antimicrobial resistance in 2017.

Antimicrobial resistance is not only a problem facing humans; it is also a serious concern for animal health and agriculture. The use of antimicrobials in the animal sector has a direct impact on human health, because food-producing animals could develop drug-resistant bacteria that spread to the environment and to people consuming the food. Therefore, WHO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health have developed a tripartite collaboration – the “One Health Approach” – to address antimicrobial resistance jointly. I want to take this opportunity to welcome our colleagues from the Food and Agriculture Organization who are here today to celebrate this important week and express the successful collaboration between our organizations.

I urge all countries in our Region and all health care professionals, the public and the media to join the Antibiotic Awareness Week campaign this year and spread these important messages.

This is an appeal to all: improve your knowledge and awareness of antimicrobial resistance.

Combating antibiotic resistance requires efforts from all nations and many sectors.

Combating antimicrobial resistance is a shared responsibility.

Thank you.