

Address by

DR AHMED AL-MANDHARI
REGIONAL DIRECTOR
WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

to the

**CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON THE REGIONAL PARLIAMENTARIAN FORUM
ON ROAD SAFETY**

Amman, Jordan, 25–27 September 2018

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to this Consultative Meeting, which we hope will contribute to enhancing efforts for road safety in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As humanity progresses in addressing many of our health concerns, the leading killer of younger generations is no longer a deadly infection or disease; it is road traffic crashes. Every year, more than 1.2 million lives are lost on the world's roads and up to 50 million people are injured. A substantial proportion of those killed and injured are younger people.

The Eastern Mediterranean has the second-highest road traffic death rate of any world region. Road traffic injuries are a problem for every country in our Region, whatever its income level. And even more alarmingly, it is young people, at the height of their potential and productivity, who are the worst affected. Over 30% of road traffic fatalities in the Region are adolescents and young people between 15 and 29 years of age. Road crashes are one of the five leading causes of death for adolescents in our Region. In fact, in some of our countries, they are the leading cause of death in this age group. The implications for health and development are grave.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite the gloomy picture, evidence shows that road traffic injuries can be prevented. Solutions and interventions have been proven to succeed as part of a safe system approach in other parts of the world.

Based on its mandate, WHO has always worked to support countries in implementing these cost-effective, evidence-based road safety interventions, drawing on related regional and global commitments. Most recently WHO, in close collaboration with other United Nations

agencies, facilitated the development of a set of Voluntary Global Performance Targets for Road Safety and Service Delivery Mechanisms which were agreed upon by Member States and endorsed at the UN General Assembly in April 2018. These targets provide a clear framework to guide actions towards achieving the related global targets of the UN Road Safety Decade of Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. Road traffic injury is also a priority technical work area for WHO in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

In addition, WHO, along with other United Nations agencies and partners, has developed implementation guidance on Global Accelerated Action for Health of Adolescents – also known as AA-HA – to help Member States prioritize interventions to prevent and respond to injuries among adolescents, including road traffic injuries.

Recognizing the crucial role of Members of Parliament in translating these commitments into national legislation and policy frameworks, WHO and our partners launched the Global Network for Road Safety Legislators in December 2016. The aim is to unite parliamentarians to adopt evidence-based legislation and policy frameworks and advocate for accelerated action to reduce deaths and injuries globally. In order to achieve this aim in different regional policy contexts, regional chapters of the Global Network are being launched. The African Regional Network for Road Safety Legislators was launched in Abuja, Nigeria, last July, and now the Eastern Mediterranean Network for Road Safety Legislators is being launched to focus on accelerating action to reduce road traffic deaths and injuries in our Region. Participating Members of Parliament will discuss the Network's governance structures and activities in the coming year.

We will also capitalize on your presence to obtain your views on a proposed regional framework to accelerate country action towards achieving the global road safety targets, with a focus on adolescents and young people. It is important to ensure that what WHO recommends is feasible and applicable at country level, for this is where the real difference is made. You are key actors in defining what can be achieved, addressing the challenges and identifying how to make progress in your countries and in the Region as a whole.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Road safety can and does happen through the deliberate and determined efforts of many sectors of society, both governmental and nongovernmental. This consultative meeting is but one step in a longer collective journey. I assure you that WHO stands committed to providing its full technical support every step of the way.

I wish you all a fruitful meeting and a pleasant stay in beautiful Amman.

Thank you.