

Address by

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to the

**SUBREGIONAL MEETING ON ENHANCING CHOLERA PREVENTION,
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

Amman, Jordan, 26–27 November 2018

Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to this subregional meeting on enhancing cholera prevention, preparedness and response, which is organized jointly by the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa and the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the participants from the ministries of health of our Member States, representatives from our partner agencies, and WHO and UNICEF staff who are present here today for your active support in preventing and controlling cholera in the Region. Your participation shows your strong commitment to finding lasting solutions to the key challenges in ending cholera in our Region.

Dear Colleagues,

Cholera is one of the oldest foes of humanity. The humanitarian crises that result from war and other protracted and complex emergencies, with the accompanying collapse or near collapse of health systems, provide the ideal ingredients for the emergence and re-emergence of cholera epidemics. The ongoing cholera situation in Yemen is a good example of how conflict, compounded by the collapse of health and other social services, can complicate preventive and control efforts for cholera. Apart from causing high morbidity and mortality, cholera poses a high burden on health care services, other social sectors, and the economy. Over a million suspected cases of cholera, including over 4000 associated deaths, have been reported in the last two years alone from the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Despite being one of the world's oldest diseases, the technical means to control and even eliminate cholera are easily available, affordable and feasible to implement. The disease can be easily treated and is easily preventable. Every death that occurs from cholera is therefore a death that is avoidable. People should not die of cholera during the current era when its treatment is affordable and should be easily available.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The aim of this meeting is to review the current cholera situation in the Region, identify best practices that can be scaled up to early detect and prevent outbreaks, and review the preparedness and other public health control measures that can best prevent the re-emergence of the disease and contain any outbreak in its early stages.

The meeting will take stock of the experience accumulated by WHO, UNICEF, ministries of health and our partner agencies in managing cholera outbreaks in the Region. It will also provide the opportunity to roll out Ending Cholera—A Global Roadmap to 2030, which WHO's Member States committed to implement during the 71st World Health Assembly in 2018. We need to combine and consolidate our efforts to step up the fight to end cholera in the Region by 2030.

Strong collaboration between WHO and UNICEF is required to ensure that we complement each other's organizational and global mandate in preventing and controlling cholera. Both WHO and UNICEF need to engage ministers of health in the Region to ensure the prioritization of cholera prevention and response efforts within public health systems. We need an inclusive, integrated approach for the coordination of cholera prevention and response efforts in our Region.

Dear Colleagues,

WHO and UNICEF are leading partners in the Global Task Force for Cholera Control and we are determined to advance the implementation of key strategies for ending cholera in our Region by 2030. The Global Task Force has identified the establishment of a regional cholera platform or similar coordination mechanism as one of the interim milestones of the road map, and this needs to be achieved before the end of 2018.

By the close of this meeting, I hope that we will have identified a mechanism for information-sharing among cholera-affected countries, neighbouring countries and partners, and agreed on common, harmonized response strategies for cholera control, with an emphasis on work at the humanitarian and development nexus.

I thank you for your presence here today. Your valuable deliberations and participation will contribute significantly to achieving our goal of ending cholera in the Region by 2030.

I wish you a very fruitful meeting and a pleasant stay in Amman. Thank you.