



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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to the

**THIRD MEETING OF THE REGIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL
ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE WHO/EMRO/UNEP/GEF-SUPPORTED
PROJECT**

Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, 12–13 July 2010

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure indeed to welcome you all to the beautiful and historical city of Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, for the Third Regional Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee meeting of the WHO/UNEP/GEF-supported project. The Regional Office sincerely thanks the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Environment Facility for their financial support.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency the Minister of Health, Dr Rida Saeed, for agreeing to host this important meeting and for honouring us with his presence.

I thank Member States and our international partners (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Stockholm Convention Secretariat) for their dedication and commitment to achieving the objectives of the project. Let me also thank members of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee for their demonstrated professional and technical expertise in supporting countries to implement this regional project.

Dear Colleagues,

When we last met in July 2009 in Cairo, Egypt, we reviewed the general status and progress of vector control implementation in project countries; harmonized different protocols for demonstration activities in priority countries; identified priority countries for capacity strengthening and others for addressing disposal of persistent organic pollutants (POPs); and agreed on the timeliness and budgets for successful implementation of such activities. The purpose of this meeting is to identify challenges and constraints in the implementation of demonstration activities in selected project countries; orient project countries on cost-effectiveness analysis on DDT alternatives; and review draft tools on cost-effectiveness analysis of DDT alternatives.

Dear Colleagues,

As you meet here today, allow me the opportunity to share with you some of the achievements that project countries have recorded with the support of UNEP/GEF. Ten of the 12 countries of the Region endemic for vector-borne diseases are now implementing integrated vector management. They have national strategic plans and have also established intersectoral coordination mechanisms drawing representatives from different sectors under the leadership of the ministries of health. Five of the ten countries have also established integrated vector management units in the Ministry of Health to coordinate the implementation of vector control for all vector-borne diseases.

Indeed countries of the Region are committed to reducing reliance on the use of DDT by implementing sustainable and cost-effective alternatives. For example, in the past five years, an estimated total of 36 million people in the Region have been able to have access to long-lasting insecticide-treated nets. This is a potential alternative to DDT and a user-friendly intervention. It is projected that about 42 million people will have access to this intervention by the end of 2010. In a few countries of the Region (Sudan and possibly Afghanistan), these efforts are, however, being threatened by the development and spread of vector resistance to pyrethroids.

The project provides opportunity to test the potential of this and other interventions as appropriate alternatives to DDT for vector-borne disease prevention. I urge Member States and our partners to address this problem seriously and cooperatively. I also understand that this meeting will be followed by a training workshop on the cost-effectiveness analysis of

alternative vector control interventions. In some countries management of the reported resistance will require the use of combination of interventions and issues of cost and effectiveness are therefore critical in taking such decisions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Implementing sustainable and cost-effective alternatives to DDT requires national capacity to implement, monitor and evaluate such alternatives. It also requires the commitment of Member States. I am pleased to inform you that WHO continues to support a regional master of science degree course in medical entomology and vector control, which was launched in Sudan in 2008 following a specific request by Member States through a Regional Committee resolution (EM/RC52/R.6). The same course curriculum was successfully adapted and launched in Pakistan in September 2009.

This regional initiative is our concerted response to the immense burden of vector-borne diseases in the world, and especially in the Region. It is also our joint response to the need to strengthen vector control in the context of integrated vector management in the countries of the Region. This is a region faced with the potential threat of emerging and re-emerging vector-borne diseases, as well as their geographical and seasonal expansion. It is my expectation that this project will continue to build on experience to date to address the capacity needs in vector control in the Region.

Dear Colleagues,

The Region faces a number of pesticide management issues. These include obsolete DDT/pesticide stocks, among other things. Parallel and in line with the objectives of this project, I am pleased to inform you that WHO has been working with countries of the Region to promote the judicious use of public health pesticides. The support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Stockholm Convention Secretariat and other UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization is greatly acknowledged.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With this note, let me end by thanking you all once again for your support. I look forward to the conclusions and recommendations of this meeting and wishing you a pleasant stay in Damascus.

Thank you.

