



*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Address of**

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**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**to the**

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL ADVISORY PANEL ON NURSING IN  
THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**Muscat, Oman, 23–25 October 2011**

Your Excellency, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the eighth meeting of the Regional Advisory Panel on Nursing in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to His Excellency Dr Ahmed bin Mohamed bin Obaid Al Saidi, Minister of Health of Oman, for kindly agreeing to host this meeting.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region developed its first regional nursing and midwifery strategy in 1997, which was adopted by the Regional Committee in 1998. For over a decade, this framework for action has served as a useful guide to Member States and the Regional Office in the development of the nursing and midwifery workforce and role changes. The strategy has provided strategic direction for policy-makers and nursing leaders at the national level. Development of nursing and midwifery continues to be a challenge and a priority for almost all ministries of health in the Region, and has attracted more investment over the past decade. Among the lessons we have learned through our work with countries in recent years, is that numerous strategies have to be adopted and a wide range of activities undertaken if we are to be successful in meeting the demands on, and expectations of, the health care system,

whether quantitative or qualitative. These strategies include developing national strategic plans for nursing and midwifery development, strengthening nurses' involvement in policy-making, improving basic nursing education, expanding continuing education activities, building up management capabilities of nurse leaders to strengthen nursing services delivery, initiating quality improvement systems in nursing and midwifery, developing evidence-based practice, and institutionalizing a regulatory system, for both nursing education and practice.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would also like to bring to your attention the resolution of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean at its Fifty-Fifth Session in 2008, on promoting nursing and midwifery development in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In that resolution, Member States called for development of a new comprehensive regional strategy for nursing and midwifery to support Member States in their efforts to scale up nursing and midwifery capacity, creating positive practice environments, developing strong committed leadership and advocating for new specialized roles.

In 2011, the World Health Organization and its key partners released strategic directions for nursing and midwifery for the next five years (2011–2015). These provide an overarching framework for collaborative action to achieve the common goal enshrined in its vision statement: “Improved health outcomes for individuals, families and communities through the provision of competent, culturally sensitive, evidence-based nursing and midwifery services”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nurses and midwives face rising levels of complexity in health care, coupled with expanding scopes of practice and responsibility, some in countries undergoing stunning social and political changes, and others riven by poverty, war, civil and political unrest. This requires more educated nurses and midwives with expanded skill sets, who are capable of responding to change, greater demands and new priorities in health care and the social realities in the places in which they live.

Given the evolution of nursing and midwifery in the Region, the growth of health systems and the dynamic nature of the health care environment, it is pertinent for the Regional

Advisory Panel on Nursing to re-visit the current regional strategy during this meeting and update it in line with the recent trends and developments in the health care delivery system.

Dear Colleagues,

I take great pleasure in addressing this important forum of nursing leaders from the Region at this very timely and necessary meeting. You will review, study and update the draft “Regional Strategy for Nursing and Midwifery Development 2012-2020”, which has been developed using the analysis report of the country nursing profiles, the present challenges facing nursing in the Region and the achievements and lessons learned over the past decade.

Nurses and midwives are active care givers across the range of services required to keep a population healthy – promoting safe birth, restoring health, coping with long-term or chronic conditions, and caring for and helping people in the end-stages of life. While advances in technology and health sciences have underpinned a significant growth of specialization and the advanced practice role, WHO continues to emphasize the need for strong orientation of health care systems towards primary health care which is person-centered and delivered in an integrated comprehensive manner. A systematic evidence-based approach to nursing and midwifery interventions is imperative for the Region. The Regional Office highly recommends and will continue to support such an approach through its collaborative efforts with the countries of the Region.

Your Excellency, Dear Colleagues,

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that Member States are in great need of the renewed regional nursing and midwifery strategy. Such a strategy will help countries to improve the health status of the people we all serve, provide health services to those who are most in need, and continue to ensure the right to health for all without discrimination based on religion, race or political affiliation.

I wish you all every success in the meeting and the challenges ahead of you. I look forward to receiving your recommendations and the final draft of the regional strategy for nursing and midwifery development 2012–2020. I am sure that your stay in Oman will be both productive and enjoyable.