**Editorial note**

The joint external evaluation (JEE) is a voluntary, collaborative, multi-sectoral process to assess country capacity in order to prevent, detect, and respond to public health risks whether occurring naturally or due to deliberate or accidental events. The JEE tool and process are key components of the World Health Organization (WHO) International Health Regulations (IHR) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and have been developed and implemented in full concordance and collaboration with related efforts such as the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and the World Organisation for Animal Health’s (OIE’s) Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway.

The International Health Regulations (2005) remain the key driver in national and international efforts to strengthen national and global health security. In accordance with WHA resolution (WHA61.2 and WHA65.23), all State Parties are required to build, maintain and sustain core public health capacities as provided for in the International Health Regulations (2005) to effectively prevent, detect, and respond to any health threat before it becomes an international emergency.

Full compliance by State Parties with the core capacities required under the IHR (2005) remains compromised in the Eastern Mediterranean Region of WHO owing to a number of critical gaps identified following the assessment conducted by the Regional Office during 2014-15 for assessment of the country’s capacity to deal with a potential importation of Ebola. Although country self-assessments indicated fairly high levels of implementation of the Regulations, subsequent assessment missions for Ebola found many critical gaps in countries that reported having met their obligations.

The joint external evaluation (JEE) is an objective assessment of implementation of the International Health Regulations with a view to measuring country-specific status and progress in achieving core capacities required under the IHR. The JEE remains a voluntary country participation, is a multi-sectoral approach by both the external teams and the host countries. JEE is one of the four components of IHR monitoring and evaluation framework (IHR MEF) and it is expected that such evaluation will help countries identify the most critical gaps within their human and animal health systems in order to prioritize opportunities for enhanced preparedness and response, and to engage with current and prospective donors and partners to effectively target resources to address gaps in IHR implementation.

It is expected that the countries in the EMR would volunteer to undertake the JEE to better understand their progress in IHR implementation and take appropriate steps for full compliance.