



Report of the seventeenth meeting of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee

Opening of the session

1. The Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean held its seventeenth meeting on 10 July 2023 as a virtual meeting through videoconferencing technology. The meeting was attended by experts nominated by Member States to serve as members of the Programme Subcommittee for a duration of two years, and by WHO staff. The agenda and list of participants are included as Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

2. The objectives of the meeting were introduced. The main objective was to review the provisional agenda, timetable and other arrangements for the 70th session of the Regional Committee. Subcommittee members were also invited to provide feedback on draft technical papers and resolutions, and to receive an update on the strategic communications and engagement plan.

Outline of the 70th session of the Regional Committee

3. An updated outline of the proposed provisional agenda and timetable for the 70th session of the Regional Committee was presented to the Programme Subcommittee. It was confirmed that the session would be an in-person meeting held at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt. Up to three duly accredited members of each Member State delegation would be able to attend the session, and would be joined by representatives from WHO's sister United Nations agencies, other intergovernmental organizations and accredited non-State actors. The draft provisional agenda remained largely unchanged from the version that had been considered and supported by the Subcommittee at its sixteenth meeting in February 2023. However, it was noted that it would now include several new items of business from WHO's global governing bodies, the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board. In addition to the formal agenda items, the provisional timetable shared with the Subcommittee accommodated a range of other events and activities, including a high-level segment of the opening session with guest speakers, pre-Regional Committee technical discussions, panel discussions, special updates, side events and closed meetings. The Subcommittee was also briefed on proposed officers (Chair and Vice-Chairs) for the Regional Committee session.

4. It was noted that the Regional Committee session would be relatively atypical in that the Regional Director's term in office was coming to an end and so it would be necessary to nominate a successor. The Regional Committee draft provisional agenda and timetable had been developed with this need in mind: there would be fewer technical papers, pre-RC technical sessions and side events than usual, to allow plenty of time for consideration of nominees. An outline of the nomination procedure was presented.

Discussion of draft technical papers and resolutions

5. The overview of the provisional agenda and timetable was followed by a more detailed presentation of the four main technical papers. It was explained that drafts had been developed through extensive consultation with Member State technical focal points and other key stakeholders. To further enhance engagement with Member States, this consultation on the technical content was being complemented with further consultation to help fine-tune both the papers and their accompanying draft resolutions. Unedited drafts of papers and resolutions had been made available to members of the Subcommittee for their feedback and would also be shared with governing bodies focal points from all WHO Member States in the Region.

6. Members of the Subcommittee provided detailed feedback on the technical papers. The critical importance of measuring progress in implementing any Regional Committee was highlighted. It was

recommended that clear interim indicators should be specified wherever possible, noting that different Member States might sometimes need to report against different indicators, given the wide diversity of circumstances in the Region. Potential sensitivities around the language used in some draft papers and resolutions were highlighted, and it was agreed that where possible terminology should reflect previous use in resolutions of the Regional Committee or global governing bodies instruments. These comments were noted by the relevant WHO technical staff for incorporation into drafts. Subcommittee members were encouraged to share any further feedback with the Secretariat by email during the month of July.

7. More generally, Subcommittee members highlighted the importance of publishing final versions of all Regional Committee documents well before the opening of the session, to ensure that Member States and other stakeholders had adequate time to consider them. The Secretariat reported that work was ongoing to make all core documents available to Member States by early September. This included the four main technical papers as well as progress reports on the implementation of numerous resolutions, updates on a range of technical and governance matters, and a report highlighting key achievements and challenges in implementing WHO's regional vision during the past five years. In addition, it was planned to publish the latest edition of a report measuring progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals in time for the Regional Committee session; while this was not part of the session documentation as such, it should provide an invaluable further reference for discussions.

Strategic communications and engagement plan

8. The Subcommittee also received a presentation outlining the strategic communications and engagement plan for the Regional Committee session. A range of communications activities and products were planned to engage stakeholders and maximize the positive impact of the session, focusing on the theme "United for a healthier future". Activities would align with global plans to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the foundation of WHO, and there would be a regional photographic exhibition developed from the global exhibition launched in Geneva, Switzerland.

Next steps and closing of the session

9. It was noted that a further meeting of the Programme Subcommittee was planned for early October to review implementation of resolutions adopted by the Regional Committee at its 69th session last year. This would be followed by a meeting of the Drafting Committee during the Regional Committee session to review updated drafts of all resolutions.

10. After thanking members of the Programme Subcommittee for their attention and valuable feedback and the Regional Office for its support, the Chair closed the session.

Annex 1. Agenda

1. Opening session
2. Adoption of the provisional programme
3. Overview of the 70th session of the Regional Committee, including: the agenda, modalities, core technical items, pre-RC sessions, side events and other events
4. Discussion of draft technical papers and resolutions
5. Overview of the strategic communication and engagement plan
6. Closing session

Annex 2. List of participants*Members of the Programme Subcommittee*

Bahrain	Dr Ejlal Alalawi
Djibouti	Ms Noura Abdi
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Dr Nicknam Mohammad Hossein
Iraq	Dr Riyadh Abdul Amer Al-Hilfi
Libya	Dr Azzam ElHadi Omar Hussein
Morocco	Mr Abdelouahab Belmadani

Apologies received from:

Syrian Arab Republic	Dr Ahmad Dmeirieh
Palestine	Dr Kamal Shakhra

WHO Secretariat

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari	Regional Director
Dr Sussan Bassiri	Director of Business Operations (BOS)
Dr Rana Hajjeh	Director of Programme Management (DPM)
Dr Christoph Hamelmann	Chef de Cabinet (CdC)
Dr Rick Brennan	Regional Emergency Director (RED)
Dr Maha El-Adawy	Director, Healthier Populations (DHP)
Dr Asmus Hammerich	Director, UHC/Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NMH)
Dr Yvan J.-f. Hutin	Director, UHC/Communicable Disease Control (DCD)
Dr Hamid Syed Jafari	Director, Polio Eradication (POL)
Dr Awad Mataria	Director, UHC/Health System Development (UHS)
Dr Arash Rashidian	Director, Science, Information and Dissemination (SID)
Dr Gülin Gedik	Coordinator, Health Work Force (UHS)
Dr Hicham El-Berri	Medical Officer, Noncommunicable Disease Management (NMH)
Eng. Mazen Malkawi	Regional Adviser, Climate Change, Health & Environment (CEHA/HPD)
Mr Amr El Tarek	Regional Adviser, Planning, Budget, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)

Ms Tarja Turtia	Acting Country Focus Support and Transformation Lead (CFS)
Mr Tobias Boyd	Manager, Publishing, Editorial and Graphic Design (PEG)
Mr Amarnath Das	Regional Compliance and Risk Manager (CRM)
Dr Nasim Pourghazian	Technical Officer DPM
Ms Ines Imbert	Technical Officer DPM
Ms Hala El Shazly	Administrative Officer RDO
Ms Samah Abdel Aziz	Governing Bodies Officer (GBS)
Ms Jessica Kanawaty	Administrative Assistant (GBS)
Mr Seif Tageldin	Governance specialist (UNV/GBS)
Mr Ahmed Shokry	IT Service Desk Assistant