

**67th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean,
12–13 October 2020
Cairo, Egypt**

**EMRO/RC67/DJ/2
13 October 2020**

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Registration	Registration is a prerequisite for accessing the Zoom platform during the Regional Committee sessions, which will be restricted to registered and approved participants.
Documents	Official documentation of the session is available in Arabic, English and French on the Regional Committee website . Participants are kindly requested to consult the documents online.
Internet access	The meeting will be conducted virtually using the Zoom video conferencing platform, facilitated from WHO's Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt. Details for accessing the virtual platform will be provided following completion of the registration process.
Support	You will find here useful tips on how to connect to and navigate the virtual Regional Committee platform, as well as useful contact information for IT and administrative support for the Regional Committee.
Statements	Written statements of no more than 600 words may be submitted for posting on the WHO regional website under the related agenda item. Written statements should be sent in advance of the opening of the 67th session of the Regional Committee. They may be submitted in lieu of a live intervention or to complement a live intervention from a Member State. Please send written statements for posting to the WHO website to emrgogovbod@who.int , indicating the name of the country delegation/entity in the subject line of the email.
WHO publications	WHO publications are available on the Regional Committee website .
Membership and attendance	The Regional Committee consists of one representative from each country or territory of WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region. For the virtual modality of RC67, access to the Zoom platform will be granted to representatives and their alternates. Advisers and representatives of other entities invited under Rule 2 of the Regional Committee's Rules and Procedures will be able to follow the sessions and deliberations through webcast.
Languages	The working languages of the Regional Committee are Arabic, English and French. Statements made in any of these languages will be interpreted simultaneously into the other two languages. Delegates will be able to follow the chosen language by selecting the preferred language when connecting to the Zoom platform. The meeting will also be webcast in multiple languages.

1. Programme of work

Tuesday, 13 October 2020

Abridged agenda item	Regular session	
3(b)	The COVID-19 pandemic in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	EM/RC67/7 EM/RC67/8
3(b)	Ensuring continuity of essential health services: a critical priority during the COVID-19 pandemic	EM/RC67/7
5(b–c)	Award of the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	EM/RC67/INF.DOC.8
	Award of the Down Syndrome Research Prize	EM/RC67/INF.DOC.9
4	Establishment of a Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks	EM/RC67/17
3(a)	Regional strategy to improve access to medicines and vaccines in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2020–2030, including lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic	EM/RC67/6
	Report of the seventh, eighth, and ninth meetings of the Programme Subcommittee	EM/RC67/13 EM/RC67/14 EM/RC67/15
6	Place and date of future sessions of the Regional Committee	EM/RC67/INF.DOC.10
7	Other business	
8	Closing session: Closure of the Regional Committee	

2. Report of meetings Monday, 12 October 2020

Abridged agenda item	Opening session
1	Formal opening of the session <p>The opening ceremony of the 67th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean was held in the Kuwait Hall, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Cairo, Egypt on 12 October 2020.</p> Address by the Regional Director <p>The Regional Director, Dr Ahmed Al Mandhari, sent his condolences to the victims, families and communities that had been hit hard by the pandemic and paid tribute to health workers and others working on the front lines, some of whom had paid the ultimate price in protecting and serving their communities. He also extended his</p>

sincere condolences to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Emir of Kuwait and to the Kuwaiti people and government on the death of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He noted that COVID-19 had highlighted the need for solidarity and cooperation between countries. Pandemic response efforts in the Region had been boosted by generous support from donors and countries totalling almost US\$ 400 million to date, but more was needed. The pandemic had exposed serious cracks and fundamental weaknesses in institutions, economies and health systems, not only in the Region, but globally, and there were potentially catastrophic economic consequences. Many countries in the Region were already facing political, economic and social instability, conflict, natural disasters, poverty and population displacement, and the pandemic was likely to push more than 34 million people into extreme poverty by the end of the year. He called on Member States to continue to work towards achieving the triple billion goals of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, and to view the pandemic as an opportunity to reformulate health policies and strategies, and ensure the implementation of WHO's vision for the Region, *Vision 2023*, through solidarity and cooperation.

Address by the Director-General

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, said that although most countries in the Region had not been among those worst affected by COVID-19, the social and economic consequences had been severe. He stressed the need for continued vigilance as the number of cases continued to rise with most people remaining susceptible to infection. Healthy populations, universal health coverage and health security were inseparable and investment in health was more important than ever. He warned countries that progress and hard-won gains in public health could be lost as the pandemic was compromising access to essential health services. The Director-General reassured countries that international initiatives should help to ensure that when a safe and effective vaccine became available, it would be distributed equitably to all countries in the Region and beyond. WHO and its partners were leading these efforts with the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator and the COVAX Facility. However, while waiting for a vaccine, countries should focus on four public health measures to address the pandemic: preventing amplification events; protecting the vulnerable to save lives and reduce strain on the health system; educating and empowering communities to protect themselves and others; and persisting with the public health basics – finding, isolating, testing and caring for cases, and tracing and quarantining their contacts.

1 (a) and (b)

The Regional Committee elected the following officers:

Chair: H.E. Dr Hala Zayed (Egypt)

Vice-Chair: H.E. Dr Hani Jokhdar (Saudi Arabia)

Vice-Chair: H.E. Dr Hassan Mohammad Al-Ghabbash (Syrian Arab Republic)

Based on the suggestion of the Chair of the Regional Committee, the Committee decided that the following should constitute the Drafting Committee:

Dr Malik Muhammad Safi (Chair) (Pakistan), Ms Hilda Harb (Vice-Chair) (Lebanon), Dr Mohamed Hédi Loueslati (Tunisia).

Secretariat: Dr Rana Hajjeh, Dr Rick Brennan, Dr Awad Mataria, Dr Asmus Hammerich, Dr Ruth Mabry, Mr Toby Boyd (Secretary).

The Regional Committee adopted the provisional agenda and provisional daily timetable.

Abridged agenda item	Regular sessions
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2 (a, c–g)

Chair: H.E. Dr Hala Zayed (Egypt)

Annual report of the Regional Director for the year 2019 and progress reports

The Regional Director presented his report to the Regional Committee on the work of WHO in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in 2019. His verbal statement focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications. The pandemic had massively disrupted health systems, economies and societies, with nearly 2.5 million cases in the Region, over 63 000 lives lost and access to health care being compromised. However, he noted that while it was a stress test for health systems, it was also an opportunity for positive change and to mobilize support for investment in health, as well as a stimulus to innovation in health care delivery. He emphasized that the regional vision of Health for All by All was more relevant than ever: the pandemic had shown that a risk to one person was a risk to everyone. WHO's global and regional strategies remained the best way to achieve that vision. The Regional Director then considered the implications of the pandemic for each of the four strategic priorities: expanding universal health coverage; protecting people from emergencies; promoting health and well-being; and transforming WHO itself for maximum country impact.

Interventions were made by representatives of the following Members of the Committee (in order): Islamic Republic of Iran, Oman, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Iraq, Morocco, Jordan, Palestine, Kuwait, Yemen, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Pakistan.
