

**68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean,
11–14 October 2021
Cairo, Egypt**

**EMRO/RC68/DJ/1
12 October 2021**

Contents

1.	Programme of work	2
2.	Report of meetings	3

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 68th 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 RC68, 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, 12 October 2021

Agenda item	Regular session	
1(a–c)	Election of Officers Adoption of the provisional agenda and provisional daily timetable Establishment of the Drafting Committee	EM/RC68/1 EM/RC68/2
2(a–m)	Annual report of the Regional Director for the year 2020 and progress reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari• Interventions by Members	EM/RC68/3 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.1 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.2 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.3 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.4 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.5 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.6 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.7 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.8 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.9 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.10 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.11 EM/RC68/INF.DOC.12

Agenda item	Regular session	
7	Polio eradication in the Eastern Mediterranean Region including the first and second meeting report of the Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks	EM/RC68/16 EM/RC68/17
6	Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth report of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee	EM/RC68/14 EM/RC68/15
9	Place and date of future sessions of the Regional Committee	EM/RC68/INF.DOC.15
4(b)	Membership of WHO bodies and committees	EM/RC68/11
3(a)	Accelerating health emergency preparedness and response – a plan of action Working Group on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to Health Emergencies; way forward (Resolution WHA74.4)	EM/RC68/4

A decade of action on the Sustainable Development Goals in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: progress, challenges, and way forward

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: special focus on strategic directions to accelerate ending tuberculosis in countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and immunization

2. Report of meetings Monday, 11 October 2021

Agenda item	Opening session
1	<p>Formal opening of the session</p> <p>The opening ceremony of the 68th session of the Region Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean was held in the Kuwait Hall, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Cairo, Egypt on 11 October 2021</p> <p>Address by the Regional Director</p> <p>Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, opened his address by noting that it had been a year of great momentum in health and that, despite the difficulties the Region faced, new prospects for action had opened up for collective efforts to achieve “Health for All by All”. He highlighted three significant challenges facing the Region. First, the COVID-19 pandemic, which had continued to disrupt health systems, economies and societies despite the development of vaccines. Although the pandemic had accelerated work to protect people from health emergencies, the Region’s progress was still slow on the billion targets for universal health coverage and health and well-being. Second, he emphasized that ongoing conflicts and humanitarian emergencies in the Region were causing increased migration and displacement, placing great pressure on the health systems of both origin and host countries. Third, he underlined the persistent threat of poliomyelitis to local, regional and global health. He noted that, as the regional <i>Vision 2023</i> was at its midway point, a taskforce of experts had conducted a systematic review of achievements and gaps in its implementation. A Midterm Push Forward Plan would be presented to the Regional Committee, which would provide priority recommendations and actions for WHO and Member States for the coming two-year period. He made special mention of the medical personnel who had worked heroically to save lives during the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing his experience of visiting Afghanistan and Lebanon with the Director-General and seeing the extent of the challenges facing the health systems and the difficulties experienced by communities in accessing basic health services. He also extended sincere thanks to health workers, volunteers and partners for their tireless efforts in countries and reiterated WHO’s willingness to strengthen partnerships to ensure the continuation of support, especially to countries suffering from resource shortages and weak health systems. He underlined that WHO’s presence on the ground was steadily being strengthened through its offices and staff in all countries of the Region, and reaffirmed the Regional Office’s commitment to continuous development and review of the performance of its programmes and country offices. The Regional Director concluded by noting WHO’s reliance on the active support of its Member States, highlighting the important proposals of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing. He assured Member States of the maximum possible technical support from the three levels of WHO for the achievement of their common goals in the Region, in cooperation with governments</p>

and nongovernmental organizations and in partnership with United Nations agencies and community-based organizations.

Address by the Director-General

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO's Director-General, noted that a wide range of health challenges faced the Region, including polio and COVID-19. While cases and deaths from COVID-19 in the Region were at their lowest levels for a year, the pandemic was far from over and inequitable access to vaccines was leaving millions of people at risk. WHO's global targets were to support every country to vaccinate at least 40% of its population by the end of 2021, and 70% by the middle of 2022. Together with partners, WHO was doing everything possible to find ways to scale up the production and distribution of vaccines. Dr Tedros referred to the lessons of the pandemic and four key areas for action identified from global reviews and reports. First, inclusive, equitable and accountable global governance. He highlighted the proposed international agreement on pandemic preparedness and response that would provide an overarching framework for global cooperation and enhance solidarity among nations. Second, increased and better financing for national and global preparedness and response, entailing a substantial increase in domestic investment, including in primary health care, and in international financing to support low- and lower middle-income countries. Third, better systems and tools employed under a One Health approach. And fourth, a strengthened, empowered and sustainably-financed WHO at the centre of global health architecture. WHO remained committed to supporting countries' response to the pandemic and to build back better. Dr Tedros made three specific requests: the continued commitment of Member States to implement proven public health and social measures, in combination with vaccination; support for the international agreement on pandemic preparedness and response at the Special Session of the World Health Assembly in November 2021; and for building a stronger WHO empowered and sustainably financed.