

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Seventieth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 9–12 October 2023**

October 2023

**REGIONAL HEALTH ALLIANCE: ACCELERATING JOINT UN IMPLEMENTATION
OF HEALTH-RELATED SDGs IN SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES**

Objectives of the event

A panel discussion will be held on 9 October 2023 on the Regional Health Alliance (RHA): accelerating joint UN implementation of health-related SDGs in support to Member States.

The objectives of the event are to:

- strengthen the impact and outputs of the RHA;
- increase Member States understanding of the Alliance’s role as facilitator and supporter of joint United Nations (UN) work at country level within the framework of country cooperation strategies and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs);
- partner UN agencies providing input and expressing their perspective and commitment on accelerating joint implementation of the health-related SDGs;
- outline actions and milestones for joint UN work on the health-related SDGs within the context of the RHA

Background

The RHA aims to coordinate regional collaboration on the implementation of health-related SDGs among its 16 member organizations, which are the International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Bank, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN Habitat), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) (which holds the RHA Secretariat).

The RHA works through seven accelerator working groups on: 1) primary health care; 2) sustainable financing for health; 3) community and civil society engagement; 4) determinants of health; 5) innovative programming in fragile and vulnerable settings; 6) research and development, innovation and access; and 7) data and digital health. In addition to the working groups, there is a cross-cutting advisory group on gender equality and a coordination team, aligned to the Global Action Plan on Healthy Lives and Well-being for All (SDG3 GAP) and aiming to provide joint support to UN country teams in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

The RHA is linked to the UN Issue-based Coalition (IBC) system under the UN Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) for the Arab States, the primary regional UN coordinating mechanism, which is chaired by the UN Deputy Secretary-General with co-Vice-Chairs from the United Nations Economic and Social

Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and UNDP, and Regional Directors of all UN agencies operating in the Region as members.

During its annual meeting in December 2021, at a time when regional reports highlighted challenges in the timely implementation of the health-related SDGs in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the RHA launched its second joint action plan (2022–2023) outlining joint actions for each accelerator group, advisory group and the Secretariat. One of the planned actions in the RHA joint action plan for each of the accelerators and the Secretariat is the mapping of its activities against priority areas for the health-related SDGs as specified in the UNSDCF. This will strengthen the country focus of the RHA to ensure a more targeted response to requests for support and to joint UN action at country level. Subsequently, at the 2022 annual meeting of the Arab States RCP, the UN Deputy Secretary-General also called for more country focus of the regional IBCs, underlining the relevance of the strategic direction of the RHA’s joint action plan for 2022–2023.

Challenges in the Region

Delivering as One UN in the implementation of the health-related SDGs remains a challenge at the regional level and in many countries and territories. All stakeholders acknowledge that progress on the SDGs is lagging behind, not only as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that progress is further complicated by ongoing emergencies and conflicts in the Region. Commitment at the highest level by regional UN agencies and other multilateral partners is critical to overcome the challenges and to drive more effective and impactful joint UN actions at regional and country level.

Panel composition

A maximum of six UN Regional Directors of RHA member agencies, including the WHO Regional Director, will form the panel. Each of the panellists will speak about regional joint UN action on a specific thematic (health-related) area of highest strategic relevance for the Region in which they are engaged with other RHA members. They will also provide suggestions on how to further intensify and accelerate joint impact. The WHO Regional Director will focus in his intervention on the importance of coordinating platforms such as the RHA for joint regional UN coordination and joint country support. There will be dedicated time for questions and interventions from Member States.

Expected outcomes

- Impact and outputs of the RHA further strengthened.
- Member States briefed on the Alliance’s role, at regional level and as a facilitator and supporter of joint UN work at country level, within the framework of country cooperation strategies and UNSDCF.
- Renewed commitment of partner UN agencies to accelerating joint UN action on the health-related SDGs.
- Actions and milestones outlined for joint UN work on the health-related SDGs in support to countries in the Region.