

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
Sixty-eighth Session
Cairo, Egypt, 11–14 October 2021**

October 2021

**PANEL DISCUSSION
HEALTH FOR PEACE – FROM THEORY TO ACTION**

On 11 October 2021, a panel event on the Global Health for Peace Initiative (GHPI), from theory to action, will be held by virtual modality. The moderated discussion will allow panellists to exchange ideas on peacebuilding through health, touching on a range of topics including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, natural and man-made crises and displacement, among others. The panel discussion will build on previous high-level convenings on the GHPI conducted from 2019 to date.

The objectives of the event are to:

- inform Regional Committee participants of ongoing work at regional level on health and peace;
- advocate for greater consensus on GHPI at the 150th session of the Executive Board;
- provide an opportunity for information sharing and exchange of best practices on GHPI;
- open a dialogue towards transforming the initiative into future concrete actions.

Background

Currently, two thirds of countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region are directly or indirectly impacted by conflict, resulting in high numbers of mortalities and morbidities, widespread displacement and migration, and protracted insecurity and violence. These negative outcomes threaten the health and well-being of millions of people and are felt most profoundly by vulnerable groups such as women and children, the elderly, internally displaced persons and refugee and migrant populations.

WHO has long recognized its vital and central role in fostering and promoting peace through health. In 1981, World Health Assembly resolution 34.38 stressed the role that the health sector can play in preserving and promoting peace as the most significant factor for the attainment of health for all. In the following decades, the Organization emphasized the concept of “Health as a Bridge for Peace” to integrate the delivery of health care with conflict management, social reconstruction and sustainable community reconciliation.

In November 2019, under the leadership of Their Excellencies the Ministers of Health of Oman and Switzerland and the Regional Director for the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, the Health for Peace Initiative (HPI) was launched. This landmark event took place in Geneva and was attended by more than 50 representatives of 24 Member States and partners. The purpose of the initiative was to promote peacebuilding in the Eastern Mediterranean Region through health and development platforms. The initiative also recognizes the importance of health actors in promoting and fostering peace in areas of conflict across the Region. Member States of other regions expressed their willingness to join the initiative and consequently it was renamed as the Global Health for Peace Initiative. A follow-up meeting hosted by Oman in May 2021 emphasized the need to formalize a structural framework for the initiative, which is going to be presented at the 150th session of the Executive Board in January 2022.

The GHPI aims to promote peace and equity and calls for the adoption of a partnership approach among Member States, United Nations partners, regional organizations and academia. The initiative seeks to centre

the principle of neutrality of the health sector to conduct diplomacy and to build capacities at the national level on health and peace concepts for leaders and health workers in conflict settings.

Panellists

- H.E. Sayyid Badr Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Oman
- H.E. Dr Ahmed Al-Saidi, Minister of Health, Oman
- H.E. Ms Nora Kronig Romero, Vice Director-General of the Federal Office of Public Health and Head of International Affairs Division, Switzerland
- H.E. Dr Fawziya Abikar Nur, Minister of Health and Social Care, Somalia
- Professor the Lord Ara Darzi, Co-Director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation
- Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean

The moderator for the panel discussion will be Dr Mohammed Abdi Jama.