

**69th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean,
10–13 October 2022
Cairo, Egypt**

**EMRO/RC69/DJ/2
11 October 2022**

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 both in-person and 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	<p>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 69th 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
WHO publications	WHO publications are available on the Regional Committee website .
Security	Please ensure that your RC69 ID badge is displayed at all times while inside the premises, if attending in person.
Interventions	To help in drafting the report of this session of the Regional Committee, delegations may provide the text of remarks on paper to a member of the WHO Secretariat or by email to emrgogovbod@who.int . NGO statements may also be submitted for posting on the website.
Membership and attendance	The Regional Committee consists of one representative from each country or territory of WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region. For the hybrid modality of the Regional Committee, Member delegations can attend in person or access the Zoom platform. 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. Member State delegation members will be able to follow in the chosen language by selecting their preferred language when connecting to the Zoom platform. The meeting will also be webcast in multiple languages. The Agenda and other documentation for the session are available in Arabic, English and French on the Regional

Available online: www.emro.who.int/about-who/regional-committee/

Virtual Regional Committee platform

Committee website. Documents will not be dispatched by post. Participants are kindly requested to consult the documents online.

A [virtual platform](#) has been created that simulates the Regional Office. It includes an exhibition of success stories from the Member States of the Region, which can also be viewed in-person in the foyer of the Regional Office. A virtual marketplace provides an exhibition hall of booths showcasing advocacy and technical products from a selected range of regional WHO initiatives. Attendees can save documents and presentations to a virtual briefcase for later viewing. These will also be emailed to attendees later on. Attendees can chat or talk to the relevant technical team for any questions or inquiries about the displayed content.

1. Programme of work

Tuesday, 11 October 2022

Agenda item	Regular session	
Session 1		
1(a)	Election of Officers	
1(b)	Adoption of the provisional agenda and provisional daily timetable	EM/RC69/1-Rev.1
1(c)	Decision on Establishment of the Drafting Committee	EM/RC69/2-Rev.1
Session 2	Annual Report of the Regional Director for the year 2021 and progress reports	
2(a)	Annual Report of the Regional Director 2021	EM/RC69/3
2(b)	Eradication of poliomyelitis	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.1
2(c)	Regional approach to implementing the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 (VS)	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.2
2(d)	Private sector engagement for advancing universal health coverage	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.3
2(e)	Strengthening the nursing workforce to advance universal health coverage in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: a call for action	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.4
2(f)	Regional strategy to improve access to medicines and vaccines in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2020–2030, including lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.5
2(g)	Strategic framework for blood safety and availability 2016–2025	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.6
2(h)	Health issues facing populations affected by disasters and emergencies, including the International Health Regulations (2005)	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.7
Session 3	Special updates:	EM/RC69/14
4(g)	Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean Region The work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB)	
Session 4	Special updates:	EM/RC69/22
7	Polio eradication in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, including the third and fourth meeting reports of the Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks	EM/RC69/23
Session 5	Reports of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth meetings of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee	EM/RC69/20 EM/RC69/21
6	Place and date of future sessions of the Regional Committee	EM/RC69/INF.DOC.9
10	Membership of WHO bodies and committees	EM/RC69/12
4(e)	Membership of WHO bodies and committees	EM/RC69/12
Session 6	Building resilient health systems to advance UHC and promote health security in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	EM/RC69/4
3(a)	Building resilient health systems to advance UHC and promote health security in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	
Session 7	Leveraging religious scholars to promote public health; the Islamic Advisory Group – Report and future plans	
Session 8	Panel discussion Learning to live with COVID-19	
Session 9	Closed Meeting (Member States only): Consultation on the relocation of the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean from Cairo to the New Capital as proposed by the Government of Egypt	

Session 10	Side Event Operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	Parallel meeting 5th floor meeting room
Session 11	Side Event The new global health sector strategies on HIV, hepatitis and STIs	Parallel meeting 7th floor meeting room
Session 12	Side Event Strengthening palliative care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	Parallel meeting Kuwait Hall

2. Report of meetings

Monday, 10 October 2022

Pre-Regional Committee technical meetings

The Regional Director, Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, noted that the aim of the meetings was to discuss issues of current interest and concern, to update Member States on the situation and progress in addressing those issues and to present any proposed strategic actions. Technical meetings were held on: Local vaccine production – a priority for the Eastern Mediterranean Region; Regional cervical cancer elimination strategy; The regional approach to the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030; Improving the monitoring of response to public health events and emergencies in the Region; and Strengthening hospital information systems in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In addition, a launch event was held for a special issue of BMJ Global Health on Peace and Health.

Formal opening of the session

The opening ceremony of the 69th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean was held in the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, Egypt, on 10 October 2022.

Address by the Vice-Chair of the 68th session

The session was opened by the Vice-Chair of the 68th session, H.E. Dr Ahmed Robleh Abdilleh, Minister of Health of Djibouti. Dr Abdilleh welcomed colleagues attending in person and joining virtually. He discussed the enormous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had exposed weaknesses and vulnerabilities in health systems and seriously set back the provision of essential health services worldwide. It was critical to build strong, resilient and flexible health care systems capable of adapting and responding to sudden changes and events, including through strengthening health emergency surveillance and response capabilities. This would require improved preparedness and effective coordination between countries, greater digitalization of health and the adoption of the One Health approach. Dr Abdilleh thanked the WHO Regional Director and Director-General for their support, leadership and commitment.

Address by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari

Dr Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, greeted participants. He highlighted the huge challenges faced by people in the Region, but emphasized his conviction that those challenges could be overcome. Dr Al-Mandhari introduced the theme of the Regional Committee – “Together for a healthier and sustainable tomorrow” – and the main agenda topics. These included One Health, digital health, universal health coverage and health security, holistic and integrated responses to communicable diseases, and promoting health and well-being.

Dr Al-Mandhari drew attention to the sacrifices made by colleagues working on the frontline. The Region continued to lose dedicated health workers to COVID-19 while, unacceptably, health workers and facilities had also been deliberately targeted during conflicts. WHO was launching the Imtinan Fund, an endowment to support the families of health workers lost in the line of duty.

Dr Al-Mandhari highlighted the critical need for multisectoral action. Nowhere was this more apparent than in efforts to protect the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The upcoming COP27 event in Egypt would provide an essential focus for collective action on climate change, including building health systems responsive to ever-increasing climate risks. Health systems and services must also be properly resourced and there was now a pressing need to find innovative solutions and sources of revenue for health. More than ever, the world needed a strong and sustainably funded WHO with the resources to carry out its mandate, and the Organization also needed to transform its ways of working to meet the demands placed on it.

Address by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, said that while the Region was reporting almost its lowest number of COVID-19 cases since the pandemic had begun many obstacles remained, including inequity between countries and low levels of vaccination among health workers and older people, which put the entire Region at risk. By mid-2022, it had been WHO's global target to achieve 70% coverage in all countries. Momentum needed to be maintained to build stronger architecture for health emergencies and Member States were urged to more actively engage in negotiations on a new, legally binding international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response and invest in the World's Bank's new Financial Intermediary Fund for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response to support catalytic and gap-filling financing to implement the core capacities of the International Health Regulations. The wide range of challenges facing the Region included floods in Pakistan, polio, conflict, drought, and food insecurity, exacerbated by increasing prices for food and fuel as a result of the Russian Federation's war in Ukraine. Countries needed to work to address the climate crisis, fuelled by the consumption of fossil fuels, that was making weather-related disasters more frequent and more extreme, and the upcoming COP27 meeting in Egypt represented an important opportunity to make concrete commitments to safeguard the health of the planet. The five priorities to promote, provide, protect, power and perform for health to recover from the setbacks of the pandemic and drive progress towards the "triple billion" targets and the Sustainable Development Goals were highlighted. The Director-General thanked Member States for the historic commitment they had made at this year's World Health Assembly to gradually increase assessed contributions and he reiterated WHO's commitment to continuing to support countries and making the Organization even more effective and efficient.

Address by H.E. Dr Ali M. Fakhro

The Regional Committee was addressed by three keynote speakers. H.E. Dr Ali M Fakhro, former Minister of Health and Ambassador of Bahrain, discussed major transformations shaping the world that would have profound impacts on health: the impact of neoliberalism, which he argued had led to the privatization of health and social services and aided the spread of epidemics and environmental disasters; the social media-fuelled rise in unscientific approaches to health that threatened to marginalize science-based medicine; and the growing replacement of health workers by robots and AI systems. Other challenges included environmental changes, genetic manipulation and the weaponization of bacteria and viruses. Health leaders were urged to assume new responsibilities and duties to help protect humanity and the planet.

Address by Dr Mahmoud Mohieldin

Dr Mahmoud Mohieldin provided an overview of the linkages that exist between climate change and health. The COVID-19 pandemic had exposed the real state of health systems, but this was just one example of a world at risk from pandemics, climate change, poverty, conflicts and financial crises which together now threatened to undo decades of health and development gains. Climate change was now recognized as a major health risk, both as a significant cause of death in itself and because it increased susceptibility to other causes of death. On the other hand, the health sector was a major contributor to greenhouse gases and other emissions. A process of change was needed. The health sector must not only deal with the effects of climate change but also reflect on its own part in driving it. The need to better integrate the environmental and climate dimensions into health and vice versa was now critical, and it was intended that the upcoming COP27 in Egypt would provide a focus for new approaches.

Address by Professor Ilona Kickbusch,

Dr Ilona Kickbusch presented an overview of the work of the WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All, a recent initiative that aims to foster a new approach to shape the economy with the objective of building healthier societies. Dr Kickbusch argued that health expenditure should be seen as a long-term investment, not a short-term cost; but at the same time, simply spending more money was not enough and a better understanding of economics and health was now needed to inform effective investment. The critical role of communities, households and individuals, especially women, in providing support should be recognized and embraced. Dr Kickbusch encouraged health leaders to use the policy briefs, frameworks and other guidance products developed by the Council and to contribute to the paradigm shift that was needed.

3. Other meetings
Tuesday, 11 October 2022

17:30	Side Event Operationalization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	Parallel meeting 5th floor meeting room
17:30	Side Event The new global health sector strategies on HIV, hepatitis and STIs	Parallel meeting 7th floor meeting room
17:30	Side Event Strengthening palliative care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region	Parallel meeting Kuwait Hall
19:30–22:00	<i>Dinner hosted by the WHO Regional Director at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization</i>	
