

**70th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean,
9–12 October 2023
Cairo, Egypt**

**EMRO/RC70/DJ/2
10 October 2023**

Registration	All participants are kindly requested to register for the 70th session of the Regional Committee through the secure online registration service at: Seventieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (9–12 October 2023) no later than 15 August 2023. It is recommended to use the latest version of Google Chrome to access the registration page. The WHO Secretariat will confirm your registration via email. Registration is a prerequisite for attending the sessions in person.
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	This year, the meeting will be conducted in person only. Wireless internet access is available in all meeting areas. The network name is RC70.
Support	You will find here 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 70th 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	A selection of recent WHO publications are available on the Regional Committee website .
Security	Please ensure that your RC70 ID badge is displayed at all times while inside the premises.
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 emrgorcrep@who.int .
Membership and attendance	The Regional Committee consists of one representative from each country or territory of WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region. Member State delegates and advisers and representatives of other entities invited under Rule 2 of the Regional Committee's Rules and Procedures, who are unable to attend in person, 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 and other interventions made in any of these languages will be interpreted simultaneously into the other two languages. Delegates will be able to follow in the chosen language by selecting their preferred language. The meeting will also be webcast in the three languages.

1. Programme of work

Tuesday, 10 October 2023

Agenda item Regular sessions of RC70

Session 1

1(a) Election of Officers

- Chair
- 2 Vice-Chairs

1(b) Adoption of the provisional agenda and provisional daily timetable [EM/RC70/1-Rev.3](#)

Decision on Establishment of the Drafting Committee

Session 2 **Final report on implementing *Vision 2023* and progress reports**

2(a–o)

2(a) Final report to Member States on progress, achievements, and challenges in implementing Vision 2023, progress reports [EM/RC70/2](#)

2(b) Poliomyelitis eradication and polio transition [EM/RC70/INF DOC 1](#)

2(c) Regional approach to implementing the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2025 [EM/RC70/INF DOC 2](#)

2(d) Scaling up mental health care: a framework for action [EM/RC70/INF DOC 3](#)

2(e) The implementation of the regional tobacco control strategy [EM/RC70/INF DOC 4-Rev.1](#)

2(f) Implementing of the regional framework on ending preventable newborn, child and adolescent deaths and improving health and development [EM/RC70/INF DOC 5-Rev.1](#)

2(g) Implementing the framework for action for the hospital sector in the Eastern Mediterranean [EM/RC70/INF DOC 6](#)

2(h) The implementation the framework for improving national institutional capacity for evidence-informed policy-making for health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2020–2024 [EM/RC70/INF DOC 7](#)

2(i) Accelerating regional implementation of the Political Declaration of the Third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, 2018 [EM/RC70/INF DOC 8-Rev.1](#)

2(j) Regional framework for action to strengthen the public health response to substance use [EM/RC70/INF DOC 9-Rev.1](#)

2(k) The implementation of the framework for strengthening health laboratory services,2016–2023 [EM/RC70/INF DOC 10](#)

2(l) Health issues facing populations affected by disasters and emergencies, including the International Health regulations (2005) [EM/RC70/INF DOC 11](#)

2(m) Implementing the regional strategy for integrated disease surveillance: overcoming data fragmentation in the Eastern Mediterranean Region [EM/RC70/INF DOC 12-Rev.1](#)

2(n) Building resilient communities for better health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region-implementation of the roadmap [EM/RC70/INF DOC 13](#)

2(o) Addressing diabetes as a public health challenge in the Eastern Mediterranean Region [EM/RC70/INF DOC 14](#)

Session 3 2(I)	Special updates: Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean Region including update from the following: Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)	EM/RC70/INF DOC 11
Session 4 6	Special updates: Polio eradication in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, including the seventh meeting report of the Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks	EM/RC70/17-Rev.1
Session 5 8	Private meeting (only Members of the Committee): Nomination of the Regional Director	EM/RC70/WP.1

2. Report of meetings

Monday, 9 October 2023

Pre-Regional Committee technical meetings

Opening the pre-Regional Committee technical meetings, the Regional Director's Chef de Cabinet, Dr Christoph Hamelmann, 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: Minimizing morbidity and mortality due to trauma in humanitarian settings; Designing and implementing primary health care-oriented models of care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: what do we know so far?; Developing and implementing national plans for the development and implementation of clinical practice and public health guidelines; and The increasing threat of vector-borne diseases: the need for an integrated approach. In addition, a panel discussion was held on: The Regional Health Alliance: accelerating Joint UN Implementation of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals to support Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Formal opening of the session

The opening ceremony of the 70th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean was held in the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, Egypt, on 9 October 2023.

Address by the Chair of the 69th session

The session was formally opened by H.E. Dr Firas Abiad, Minister of Public Health of Lebanon, on behalf of H.E. Dr Mai Al-Kaila, Minister of Health of Palestine and Chair of the 69th Session of the WHO Regional Committee. He delivered a message from Dr Al-Kaila that recalled last year's deliberations and resolutions on health security, One Health, control of communicable diseases, promoting health and well-being, digital health, the sustainable financing of WHO, amendments to the International Health Regulations and strengthening pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Although there had been achievements during the five-year implementation period for WHO's regional vision, Vision 2023, almost half the countries of the Region were facing complex challenges as they responded to humanitarian emergencies and disease outbreaks and tried to maintain essential services. To move forward, it was necessary to work collectively and build on the lessons learned and capacities developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr Al-Kaila thanked the Regional Director, Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, for his dedication, efforts and leadership, saying that the Region would continue to collaborate, innovate and advocate for better health for all and by all, and that together it could overcome the challenges that lay ahead.

Joining the session online from Palestine, Dr Al-Kaila spoke of the destructive impact of the current conflict on health care facilities and workers in the Gaza Strip, including on Beit Hanoun Hospital, and called for a cessation of hostilities, noting that access to health care was a human right.

Address by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari

Dr Ahmed Salim Al-Mandhari greeted participants for his final Regional Committee as WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. He reflected on recent successes achieved despite the Region's challenging context and expressed his pride in serving the Region. Dr Al-Mandhari underlined the importance of working together to achieve Health for All by All and called on Member States to contribute to the health solidarity fund endorsed in 2010 by the Committee. Dr Al-Mandhari echoed world leaders at last month's United Nations General Assembly in advocating for forward-looking approaches even during crises. He noted that climate change was inextricably linked to health, causing increased mortality and morbidity and the spread of infectious diseases. The upcoming COP28 climate conference in the United Arab Emirates represented an important opportunity.

Dr Al-Mandhari called for renewed momentum towards universal health coverage delivered through a primary health care approach, as recently reaffirmed at the General Assembly. The Regional Director emphasized the power of leadership in action, citing examples from across the Region. Health should be pushed to the top of political agendas, investment priorities and plans. Spending on health needs in the Region should surpass the global average per capita, and it was critical to address persistent inequalities in the right to health within the Region and to incorporate behavioural insights into WHO's work and keep abreast of technological developments. In closing, Dr Al-Mandhari announced the launch next month of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Chapter of the WHO Youth Council. He expressed his intention to continue to advocate for collective solidarity and a healthy future for all.

Address by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, said that it was an important moment for the Region, as Member States prepared to elect a new Regional Director, and for Egypt, celebrating success in massively reducing hepatitis C incidence. He expressed deep concern over the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, which could only be solved through dialogue, understanding and peace. This was just one crisis among many in the Region, but it was essential to resist despair and continue to seek common ground and the common good. The recent political declarations of high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, universal health coverage and tuberculosis all depended on a strong WHO.

The Director-General welcomed the Regional Director's report on implementing Vision 2023. WHO was working with Member States to develop the 14th General Programme of Work based on five priorities – to promote, provide, protect, power and perform for health. The first priority included the existential threat of climate change, and he welcomed the proposed regional framework for action on climate change, health and the environment and looked forward to COP28 in the United Arab Emirates. As regards the second priority, he urged Member States to focus on financial protection for their populations; welcomed the technical paper on health workforce in the Region; and called for a focus on maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, including restoring routine immunization to pre-pandemic levels. With regard to the third priority, he welcomed the paper on strengthening public health readiness for mass gatherings and the regional framework on addressing NCDs in emergencies. WHO was working to develop more equitable, inclusive and coherent global architecture for health emergency preparedness and response, but negotiations on a new pandemic accord and amendments to the International Health Regulations were moving too slowly. The other two priorities were enablers of the first three. WHO was allocating more than half the total Programme Budget for the next biennium to country offices, and continuing efforts to strengthen its workforce, achieve gender equity at all levels, and ensure zero tolerance for all forms of sexual misconduct. Dr Tedros concluded by expressing his appreciation for the work of the Regional Director, Dr Al-Mandhari, noting he had served the Region with distinction and humility.

High-level segment

Ms Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group

Ms Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, noted that setbacks such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of climate change highlighted the need for solidarity, shared innovation and avoiding siloes. It was critical to unite for a healthy future and work together on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Acceleration and cooperation were particularly important to meet targets in areas that were not currently on track. The Regional Health Alliance of 17 UN agencies facilitated by WHO was a shining example of collaboration. Investing in primary health care was essential to deliver universal health coverage and build resilience for future pandemics. Ms Mohammed urged leaders to rise to their responsibility to offer effective solutions.

Dr Mostafa El Feki, Egyptian Politician and Diplomat

Professor Dr Mostafa El Feki, an Egyptian politician, journalist and political thinker, said health needed to be high on political agendas, with a focus on sustainable development. There were no dividing lines between politics, economics, health and education and a change in one sector always eventually affected other sectors. The COP climate change conference showed the numerous interconnections between politics and the environment. Equally, all knowledge fields and disciplines were interconnected in multiple ways, so good health care was connected to good education and to enlightened political discourse.

Professor El Feki expressed his appreciation of WHO and recognized the contributions and efforts of the Director-General and Regional Director. He noted that all people seek safe, peaceful and secure lives. Conflicts could wound humanity indelibly. In positive contrast, WHO could help to build partnerships and bridges between all actors in society.

Dr Omnia El Omrani, COP27 President's Youth Envoy

Dr Omnia El Omrani, the COP27 President's Youth Envoy, described the impact of climate change on health and well-being, including mental health. The Eastern Mediterranean Region was acutely affected by food insecurity, scarcity of resources, lack of safe drinking water, disease and fragility. Increasing temperatures were predicted to make emerging infectious diseases more common and severe. Climate change and conflict were driving wide-scale displacement, with a disproportionate impact on women.

Dr El Omrani said people, especially younger people, were calling on governments and public institutions to enact evidence-based, radical solutions to deal with the changing climate. It was critical to institutionalize youth participation in government and in other formal roles such as the new WHO Youth Council. The Egyptian Presidency of COP27 had set an example in appointing the first official youth envoy to the President of the UN Conference of Parties. COP28 offered further opportunities to draw attention to climate and health interventions. Dr El Omrani called for intentional integration and intergenerational collaboration, and for climate and health policies grounded in the needs and insights of the most vulnerable youth.