

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

**EMRO/RC70/DJ/3  
11 October 2023**

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| <b>Registration</b>              | All participants are kindly requested to register for the 70th session of the Regional Committee through the secure online registration service at: <a href="#">Seventieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (9–12 October 2023)</a> 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.   |
| <b>Documents</b>                 | Official documentation of the session is available in Arabic, English and French on the Regional Committee <a href="#">website</a> . Participants are kindly requested to consult the documents online.   |
| <b>Internet access</b>           | This year, the meeting will be conducted in person only. Wireless internet access is available in all meeting areas. The network name is RC70.  |
| <b>Support</b>                   | You will find <a href="#">here</a> useful contact information for IT and administrative support for the Regional Committee.   |
| <b>Statements</b>                | Written statements of no more than 600 words may be submitted for posting on the WHO regional <a href="#">website</a> 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 <a href="mailto:emrgogovbod@who.int">emrgogovbod@who.int</a> , indicating the name of the country delegation/entity in the subject line of the email. |
| <b>WHO publications</b>          | A selection of recent WHO publications are available on the Regional Committee <a href="#">website</a> .  |
| <b>Security</b>                  | Please ensure that your RC70 ID badge is displayed at all times while inside the premises.  |
| <b>Interventions</b>             | 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 <a href="mailto:emrgorcrep@who.int">emrgorcrep@who.int</a> .   |
| <b>Membership and attendance</b> | 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.   |
| <b>Languages</b>                 | 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

Wednesday, 11 October 2023

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### Agenda item Regular sessions of RC70

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| Session 1 |  |  |
| 5         | Reports of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth meetings of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee  | <a href="#">EM/RC70/15</a><br><a href="#">EM/RC70/16</a> |
| 7         | Amended and restated terms of reference of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean Region   | <a href="#">EM/RC70/13</a>                               |
| 12        | Place and date of future sessions of the Regional Committee  | <a href="#">EM/RC70/INF DOC 18</a>                       |
| 4(d)      | Membership of WHO bodies and committees  | <a href="#">EM/RC70/9</a>                                |
| Session 2 | <b>Technical paper</b>   |  |
| 3(a)      | Addressing noncommunicable diseases in emergencies: a regional framework for action  | <a href="#">EM/RC70/3-Rev.1</a>                          |
| Session 3 | <b>Technical paper</b>   |  |
| 3(b)      | Strengthening public health readiness for mass gatherings in the Eastern Mediterranean Region  | <a href="#">EM/RC70/4-Rev.1</a>                          |
| Session 4 | <b>Panel discussion</b><br>Youth and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: a better future for all<br>Panellists:<br>H.E. Dr Ali Haji Adan, Minister of Health and Human Services, Somalia<br>H.E. Kamal Daqish, Minister of Youth and Sports, Tunisia<br>Dr Faris Elfarsi, Omani Youth Council, Oman<br>Dr Arwa Hany, Liaison Officer to WHO and former Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) |  |
| Session 5 | <b>Technical paper</b>   |  |
| 3(c)      | Health workforce in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: from COVID-19 lessons to action  | <a href="#">EM/RC70/5</a>                                |
| Session 6 | <b>Technical paper</b>   |  |
| 3(d)      | Climate change, health and environment: a regional framework for action, 2023–2029   | <a href="#">EM/RC70/6</a>                                |
| Session 7 | <b>Side event– Closed meeting</b><br>The effect of sanctions on health and health systems  |  |
| Session 8 | Meeting of the Drafting Committee  | 7th floor meeting room                                   |
| Session 9 | <b>Closed meeting:</b>   | 3rd floor meeting room                                   |
| 9(a)      | Foundation for the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region   | <a href="#">EM/RC70/INF DOC 15</a>                       |

## **2. Report of meetings**

### **Tuesday, 10 October 2023**

#### **Agenda item Regular sessions**

The Regional Committee elected the following officers:

Chair: H.E. Dr Ali Haji Adam Abubakar, Minister of Health and Human Services of Somalia

Vice-Chair: H.E. Dr Ahmed Robleh Abdilleh, Minister of Health of Djibouti

Vice-Chair: H.E. Dr Khaled Abdelghaffar, Minister of Health and Population of Egypt

In accordance with rule 6 of its rules of procedure, the Regional Committee agreed that sessions identified as closed sessions in the timetable would be limited to members of the Committee and the necessary minimum Secretariat presence, with no observers, in an exception to its normal practice of open meetings.

Based on the suggestion of the Chair of the Regional Committee, the Committee decided that the following should constitute the Drafting Committee:

Dr Ejlal Alalawi (Bahrain) (Vice-Chair), Dr Nicknam Mohammad Houssein (Islamic Republic of Iran), Dr Riyadh Abdul Amer Al-Hilfi (Iraq) (Chair), Dr Azzam ElHadi Omar Hussein (Libya), Dr Kamal Shakhra (Palestine). Secretariat: Dr Rana Hajjeh, Dr Christoph Hamelmann, Dr Richard John Brennan, Dr Maha El-Adawy, Dr Asmus Hammerich, Dr Awad Mataria, Dr Arash Rashidian, Mr Tobias Boyd.

The Regional Committee adopted the provisional agenda and provisional daily timetable.

#### **Regional Director's report on the implementation of *Vision 2023* and progress reports**

The Regional Director presented his report on implementing WHO's regional vision during the period 2018–2023 and noted a new regional report on progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Region was not on track to achieve the SDGs, but the situation could be transformed if all resources were mobilized through strong leadership and partnership. The Region's impressive response to COVID-19 and the many other examples of success in the *Vision 2023* report showed what could be achieved. The Regional Director called on Member States and partners to build on recent successes and lessons learned to meet public health commitments. Concerted efforts were required to eradicate polio, tackle other communicable and noncommunicable diseases, and promote health. Countries must invest more in emergency preparedness and response, and should engage fully in ongoing discussions on the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, prevention, response and resilience. In closing, the Regional Director thanked Member States, partners and the WHO workforce for their support, and pledged to help his successor realize the vision of health for all by all.

Interventions were made by representatives of the following Members of the Committee (in order): Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Pakistan, Somalia, Morocco, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Tunisia.

#### **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**

The Regional Emergency Director, WHO Health Emergencies Programme, presented an update on emergencies in the Region. He said the Region faced multiple health emergencies from a variety of causes, leading to an overwhelming and worsening burden of morbidity and mortality. In response, WHO had further professionalized its approach to managing emergencies, including by adopting a comprehensive all-hazards approach, and had learned lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. Improving country capacities to prepare for, detect and respond to emergencies remained a priority in the Region and progress had been made in the areas of disease surveillance, laboratory and clinical capacity, and emergency operations centres, with notable successes in averting cholera mortality, improving outcomes from severe acute malnutrition and preventing famine and the related excess mortality. However, operational readiness needed to be improved, International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) capacities strengthened, and fragmentation and duplication addressed. There was a need to sustain the gains made during the COVID-19 pandemic, build greater resilience and redouble efforts to improve preparedness.

Dr Jaouad Mahjour, Head of WHO Secretariat to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body and International Health Regulations Amendments, described the ongoing progress of the Working Group on Amendments to

the IHR (WGIHR) and the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Regarding the latter, he stressed the need to have a draft text ready for consideration at the World Health Assembly in 2024, and urged greater participation of Member States from the Region in the process.

Interventions were made by representatives of the following Members of the Committee (in order): Jordan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Bahrain, Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia.

The Regional Emergency Director welcomed the interventions and thanked Member States for their commitment to building their IHR and all-hazards emergency preparedness and response capacities. He was mindful of the registered and unregistered refugee burden on some countries and agreed on the need to have an integrated approach to building the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience. He welcomed and encouraged the involvement of Member States of the Region in the ongoing IHR amendments and INB processes.

The WHO Regional Director thanked the Member States for the achievements made, including those prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, noting it was important to build on these successes. WHO was committed to addressing the challenges posed by the huge refugee burden in the Region, and would continue to strive for the best solutions to the many challenges faced by the countries of the Region.

### **Special updates:**

#### **Polio eradication in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, including the seventh meeting-report of the Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks**

The Director of Polio Eradication presented an update on the status of polio eradication in the Region. He noted that only nine cases of wild poliovirus have been identified in 2023 (six in Afghanistan, three in Pakistan), in traditional reservoirs of the disease, marking two years without circulation, and stopping transmission in the near future remained an achievable goal. However although the outbreak of vaccine-derived poliovirus in Yemen was declining, without permission for outbreak response vaccination in the northern governates resurgence was predicted; responses to similar outbreaks in Sudan and Egypt had been successful. Vaccination coverage, environmental surveillance and effective outbreak response remained key, as did addressing waning immunity in key populations. The importance of international cooperation, providing assistance to task forces, the role of communities and engagement, and of religious leaders was also emphasized.

The seventh meeting of the Regional Subcommittee for Polio Eradication and Outbreaks, established in response to resolution EM/RC67/R.4, was held in February 2023.

Interventions were made by representatives of the following Members of the Committee (in order): Pakistan, Bahrain, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Kuwait, Djibouti, Sudan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Qatar.

The Director of Polio Eradication acknowledged the regional solidarity and resilience shown by countries who persisted in vaccination and surveillance activities, despite crises and disasters, and called for continued commitment from every country.

The Regional Director emphasized that the health of future generations rested on the Committee's shoulders and described the weakness in the immune system of a child with polio as a leadership failure that had left them vulnerable to a preventable disease.

The Director-General recognized the commitment of all involved and added his wish that the world seize this opportunity to eradicate polio.

### **3. Other meetings**

#### **Wednesday, 11 October 2023**

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| 16:30 | Side event<br>Closed meeting: The effect of the sanctions on health and health systems   |                        |
| 18:00 | Side event<br>Meeting of the Drafting Committee  | 7th floor meeting room |
| 18:00 | Side event<br>Closed meeting: Foundation for the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region | 3rd floor meeting room |