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## **Report of the thirteenth meeting of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee**

### **Opening of the session**

1. The Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean held its thirteenth meeting on 23–24 February 2022 as a virtual meeting through videoconferencing technology. The Programme Subcommittee was established in response to resolution EM/RC63/R.6 (2016).
2. The meeting was attended by experts nominated by Member States to serve as members of the Programme Subcommittee for a duration of two years, and by WHO staff. The agenda and list of participants are included as Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.
3. The Programme Subcommittee elected the following officers for a duration of one year.<sup>1</sup>

Chair: Dr Ahmed ElSobky (Egypt)  
Vice-Chair: Dr Ahmad Dmeirieh (Syrian Arab Republic)  
Rapporteur: Ms Noura Abdi (Djibouti)

4. An overview of the Programme Subcommittee was presented, including its establishment, terms of reference, membership and meetings. It was noted that the Programme Subcommittee played a crucial role in ensuring that Regional Committee business focused on priority issues for countries.
5. The objectives of the thirteenth meeting were introduced. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the technical agenda for the 69th session of the Regional Committee. Subcommittee members would be invited to consider the overall theme for the 69th session and to discuss proposed agenda items in detail. It was further noted that the intention was to hold the 69th session as a full-length face-to-face session at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo, after severe disruption from the pandemic had necessitated holding the 67th and 68th sessions virtually. Preparations were being made on that basis, but would be confirmed at two further meetings of the Subcommittee later in the year.

### **Preliminary outline of the 69th session of the Regional Committee**

6. An outline of the proposed agenda for the 69th session of the Regional Committee was presented to the Programme Subcommittee. An overarching theme was proposed: “Reaching the Sustainable Development Goals in the post-COVID-19 age: accelerating universal health coverage and health security – One Health for All by All”. A list of proposed topics for different agenda items was shared with participants, as well as brief proposals for each topic. Subcommittee members listened to concise presentations of the proposals. This was followed by a detailed discussion with the Secretariat and the responsible officers as necessary.
7. The proposals fell under five broad areas: a) technical papers for the Regional Committee; b) pre-Regional Committee technical sessions; c) panel discussions to be held during the Committee session; d) side events; and e) exhibitions and other initiatives to be held or made available in the margins of the Regional Committee session under the umbrella term “marketplace”. It was explained that Regional Committee technical papers were intended to present important public health issues in the Region where it was felt that the time was ripe for a Regional Committee resolution to help achieve genuine positive impact on health in countries of the Region. For each of the proposed technical papers, the Programme Subcommittee was also presented with a provisional outline of the action points for, respectively, Member States and the Secretariat

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<sup>1</sup> See EM/RC63/8 Rev.2

that might be requested via a related draft resolution. By contrast, pre-Regional Committee technical sessions typically addressed **important** topics, but ones which either (i) had not yet been developed to the point where they might form the basis of a Regional Committee resolution or (ii) concerned a new globally agreed resolution or strategy which needed to be implemented in the Region.

8. The topics agreed by the Programme Subcommittee are listed in Annex 3 along with the lead department of the WHO Regional Office responsible for delivering each item and the technical departments that will collaborate on cross-cutting items.

9. It was noted that, in addition to these topics, the Regional Committee agenda would also include several items of statutory business, including the annual report of the Regional Director, progress reports on implementing certain resolutions, an update on WHO transformation in the Region, items of business from WHO's global governing bodies referred for action or information, and several other standing items. The items from WHO's global governing bodies would include, among others, updates from the Working Group on Sustainable Financing and the Working Group on Preparedness and Response. The Programme Subcommittee was briefed on these important working groups.

#### *Regional Committee technical papers*

10. Five potential topics for technical papers were proposed to the Subcommittee by the Secretariat. It was noted that the topics were intended to align with the proposed theme of the Regional Committee session, and most topics would require close collaboration across technical departments and programmes. Work on developing papers would need to begin soon in order to ensure their timely circulation to Member States in advance of the Regional Committee session. The process of developing papers was likely to involve consultation with Member States and key stakeholders, and the Programme Subcommittee was encouraged to promote engagement from all Member States.

#### *Panel discussions*

11. It was proposed by the Secretariat that the Regional Committee agenda should also include three panel discussions. Provisionally, all panel discussions were scheduled to be held during the main Regional Committee session. While each technical paper would generally be expected to support a draft resolution for the Regional Committee's consideration, panel discussions allowed multiple perspectives to be heard on key issues. All three proposed discussion topics required wide-ranging and long-term, multisectoral action by a range of stakeholders, and the panel discussion format would facilitate input from several key stakeholders.

#### *Pre-Regional Committee meetings*

12. The Subcommittee accepted six proposed topics for pre-RC technical sessions. It was noted that this represented a very full provisional agenda for the limited pre-RC meeting time available.

#### *Side events*

13. The Subcommittee considered six proposals for side events to be held in the margins of the Regional Committee session. It was noted that while Regional Committee sessions normally featured one or two side events focusing on Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund, effective collaboration with these important partners would be even more prominent at the 69th session if the proposal for a technical paper on optimizing support from them was approved.

#### *Marketplace topics*

14. In addition to side events, it was proposed to showcase a wide range of other issues and developments through exhibitions, videos, and more. The 68th Regional Committee session had featured an innovative online "marketplace" exhibition space which was publicly accessible worldwide, bringing information about a range of issues and initiatives in the Region to a wider audience. While there was strong support for returning to face-to-face meeting as the main modality for the 69th session, the Secretariat were keen to maintain online

presentation of marketplace topics. It was noted that proposals for marketplace items were relatively provisional and whereas work to prepare proposed technical papers and other technical items would need to begin early to ensure the prompt preparation of documents, there was more scope to add, remove, or adapt marketplace topics later in the year.

*Decisions by, and feedback from, the Programme Subcommittee*

15. The Programme Subcommittee formally endorsed the list of proposed Regional Committee items presented by the Secretariat, including all proposed technical papers, panel discussions, pre-RC technical sessions, side events and marketplace items. The Subcommittee provided detailed feedback and suggestions on proposals, to be taken into account by technical teams in drafting papers. Furthermore, there was approval for a proposal from Egypt to produce a marketplace item presenting the country's experience of using digital technologies to support a family approach to primary health care.

16. In addition, the Subcommittee requested that some further issues be emphasized within the provisional agenda for the Regional Committee session. Vaccination was highlighted as a key issue; in particular, it was noted that anti-vaccine sentiment and disinformation from the COVID-19 pandemic were now challenging other immunization efforts. The significant burden of mental health conditions and other noncommunicable diseases in the Region should also feature strongly during the session. While it was recognized that there was limited scope to add new agenda topics, given the limited time available, the Secretariat was requested to ensure that they were well reflected within the agenda and to update the Subcommittee in this regard on due course.

*Closing of the session*

17. After thanking members of the Programme Subcommittee for their attention and valuable feedback and the Regional Office for its support, the Chair closed the session.

## **Annex 1. Agenda**

1. Opening session
2. Adoption of the provisional programme
3. Overview of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean
4. Election of office bearers of the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (February 2022 – February 2023)
5. Preliminary outline of the 69th session of the Regional Committee, including proposals for pre-RC sessions, technical papers, side events and other events/exhibitions
6. Closing session

**Annex 2. List of participants***Members of the Programme Subcommittee*

Djibouti	Ms Noura Abdi
Egypt	Dr Ahmed ElSobky
Libya	Dr Saeduldeen Abdulwakil
Palestine	Dr Yaser Bouzia
Sudan	Dr Hanadi Haydar Hassan
Syrian Arab Republic	Dr Ahmad Dmeirieh
United Arab Emirates	Ms Shaima Ahli (substituting for Dr Hussain Alrand, who was unable to participate)
Yemen	Dr Mohammed Mustafa Rajamanar

*WHO Secretariat*

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari	Regional Director
Dr Rana Hajjeh	Director of Programme Management
Dr Christoph Hamelmann	Chef de Cabinet (CdC)
Dr Sussan Bassiri	Director of Business Operations
Dr Maha El-Adawy	Director, Healthier Populations (DHP)
Dr Asmus Hammerich	Director, UHC/Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NMH)
Dr Yvan J.-f. Hutin	Director, UHC/Communicable Disease Control (DCD)
Dr Awad Mataria	Director, UHC/Health System Development (UHS)
Dr Arash Rashidian	Director, Science, Information and Dissemination (SID)
Dr Abdinasir Abubakar	Manager, Infectious Hazard Prevention and Preparedness
Dr Rayana Ahmed Bou Haka	Manager, Country Cooperation and Collaboration
Dr Henry Doctor	Coordinator, Information Systems for Health
Dr Houda Langar	Regional Adviser, Access to Medicines and Health Technologies
Dr Pierre Nabeth	Programme Area Manager, Health Emergency Information and Risk Assessment
Dr Qaiser Pasha	Senior Corporate Partnership Manager
Dr Dalia Samhoury	Programme Area Manager, Country Health Emergency Preparedness and IHR

Mr Toby Boyd	Manager, Publishing, Editorial and Graphic Design
Ms Hala Khudari	Technical Officer, Director of Programme Management's Office
Ms Hala El Shazly	Administration Officer, Regional Director's Office
Ms Samah Abdel Aziz	Senior Administrative Assistant, Governing Bodies

### Annex 3. List of topics agreed for the 69th session of the Regional Committee

Department(s)	Proposed item
<b>Technical papers</b>	
UHS (lead) with WHE, DCD, NMH, HPD, SID and UHS	Building resilient health systems to advance UHC and promote health security in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
DCD (lead) with UHS	Accelerating the prevention, control and elimination of communicable diseases through integration: optimizing support from Gavi and the Global Fund
HPD	Promoting health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: moving from theory to action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
WHE (lead) with DCD and HPD	Advancing the implementation of One Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
SID	Regional strategy for fostering digital health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (2023–2027): building resilient health systems to advance universal health coverage and promote health security in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
<b>Panel discussions</b>	
WHE	Learning to live and work with COVID-19 and other emergency settings
CdC (lead) with WHE, DCD, NMH, HPD, SID and UHS	Towards country impact: supporting Member States to accelerate the implementation of the health-related Sustainable Developments Goals through joint action by UN country teams
CRP (lead) with BOS and CdC	Leveraging partnerships for collective and transformative actions to achieve Health for All by All
<b>Pre-RC technical sessions</b>	
UHS (lead) with VPI/DCD	Local vaccine production – a priority for the Eastern Mediterranean Region
NMH (lead) with DCD and HPD	Regional cervical cancer elimination strategy
HPD (lead) with WHE	The regional approach to the Decade of Action for Road Safety, 2021–2030
WHE	Improving monitoring of response to emergencies in humanitarian and fragile settings in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
SID (lead) with UHS	Enhancing secondary care information systems (hospital management information systems) for national information system objectives
CdC	Regional Health Alliance: Joint Action Plan, 2022–2023
<b>Side events</b>	
UHS	Operationalizing the humanitarian–development–peace nexus in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
DCD	The new global health sector strategies on HIV, hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections
NMH	Strengthening palliative care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
NMH	Report on the most recent data on emerging tobacco and nicotine products
HPD	One Planet, One Health: sustainable and resilient health care systems
Government of Tunisia	Institutionalizing participatory governance in health

<b>Marketplace: exhibitions, booths, press releases and other innovative ways to showcase important issues and developments</b>	
<b>Vision 2023 pillar 1: Expanding universal health coverage</b>	
UHS	Digital transformation in the education of health professionals in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
UHS	What role did primary health care play in the COVID-19 response in the Eastern Mediterranean Region?
NMH	Promoting a healthy diet to address obesity and noncommunicable diseases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region – from policy to implementation
NMH	The urgency of reasserting control over tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) in the Region
Government of Egypt	Using digital technologies to support a family approach to primary health care [exact topic to be confirmed]
DCD	Boosting tuberculosis research in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
<b>Vision 2023 pillar 2: Addressing health emergencies</b>	
WHE	Case study on the successful establishment and operationalization of a Public Health Emergency Operation Centre (PHEOC) at the national and subnational levels in Saudi Arabia
WHE	Emergency medical teams
WHE	The WHO logistics hub in Dubai
<b>Vision 2023 pillar 4: Making transformative changes in WHO</b>	
CdC	Implementing the WHO transformation agenda in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
CdC	WHO Translation and Interpretation Services in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
CdC	Country cooperation strategies
CdC and DHP	Gender and health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
CRP	The power of partnerships: the Healthy 2022 World Cup – Creating Legacy for Sport and Health project