



Report of the fourteenth 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 fourteenth meeting on 29 June 2021 as a hybrid meeting: the Chair attended in person from the WHO Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt, along with the WHO Regional Director and several other members of the WHO Secretariat, while other Subcommittee members and WHO staff joined proceedings through videoconferencing technology. 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.

2. The objectives of the meeting were introduced. The main objective was to review the provisional agenda and modalities for the 69th session of the Regional Committee. Subcommittee members were also invited to provide feedback on draft technical papers and resolutions.

Outline of the 69th session of the Regional Committee

3. An updated outline of the proposed provisional agenda and timetable for the 69th session of the Regional Committee was presented to the Programme Subcommittee. The agenda remained almost unchanged from the provisional agenda that had been considered and supported by the Subcommittee at its thirteenth meeting. However, it was noted that it would now include several new items of business from WHO's global governing bodies, the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board. In addition to the formal agenda items, the provisional timetable shared with the Subcommittee accommodated a range of other events and activities, including pre-Regional Committee technical discussions, panel discussions, special updates, side events, closed meetings and a virtual "marketplace" of communications products. In relation to the marketplace, the Subcommittee was informed that it was now planned to include a virtual exhibition of country success stories from across the Region.

4. The overview of the provisional agenda and timetable was complemented with a more detailed presentation of the main technical elements of the agenda. It was noted that as part of efforts to maximize opportunities for engagement among Member States, the Secretariat was prioritizing the timely production of core technical documents. Work was well advanced on the Regional Director's annual report and the five technical papers with a view to ensuring that they were available to Member States in early September. Technical papers had been developed through extensive consultation with Member State focal points and other key stakeholders. Drafts were made available to members of the Subcommittee along with early-stage drafts of possible accompanying resolutions, and their feedback was solicited.

5. The Subcommittee also received a presentation outlining the strategic communications plan for the Regional Committee session. It was explained that a range of communications activities and products were planned to engage stakeholders and maximize the positive impact of the session, focusing on the theme "Together for a healthier and sustainable tomorrow". Regional and country communications working groups had been established, and work was underway.

Discussion

6. The Subcommittee members discussed the proposed updated agenda, timetable and communications plan. Several comments were made in relation to some draft technical papers and resolutions. In particular, Subcommittee members emphasized the importance of: aligning the language of the technical paper and draft

resolution with the relevant Decision passed by the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly; building capacities across all relevant ministries and organizations to ensure effective collaboration for One Health and other programmes; and synergizing efforts to tackle both communicable and noncommunicable diseases where possible. These comments were noted by the relevant WHO technical staff for incorporation into drafts. Subcommittee members were encouraged to share any further feedback with the Secretariat by email during the month of July.

Proposed modalities for the 69th session of the Regional Committee

7. The Subcommittee received a presentation on proposed modalities for the 69th session of the Regional Committee. It was noted that, while virtual sessions had proved a reasonable way of progressing core business for WHO's regional and global governing bodies during the peak of disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, in-person meetings offered considerably more scope for networking, interaction and engagement. The recent Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly had been held successfully as a fully in-person meeting, and the Secretariat had noted strong support among Member States to hold the Regional Committee session in person as well, if possible. At the same time, consideration had to be given to ensuring that all Member States were able to participate in Regional Committee proceedings, whatever the prevailing epidemiological situation might be in October, and to enabling participation from a wide range and large number of stakeholders while mitigating the risk of infection. The Secretariat therefore proposed to hold the session through a hybrid modality. Up to three duly accredited members of each Member State delegation would be able to attend the Regional Committee meetings in the Kuwait Conference Hall at the WHO Regional Office. Other delegation members would be able to participate in meetings through online videoconferencing technology; their presence would be taken into account in determining whether meetings were quorate, and they would be able to make interventions during meetings. Furthermore, all Member States would be able to submit written or video statements before the opening of the Regional Committee session. All Regional Committee meetings apart from closed meetings would be webcast to other registered participants.

Discussion

8. Subcommittee members endorsed the proposal to adopt a hybrid modality for the Regional Committee session.

Closing of the session

9. 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. Updated outline of the 69th session of the Regional Committee, including: the agenda, pre-RC sessions, side events and other events/exhibitions; core technical items; and strategic communications plan
4. Proposed modalities for the 69th session of the Regional Committee
5. 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	Dr Hussain Alrand and Dr Haifa Madi (Dr Madi substituted for Dr Alrand in the first half of the meeting)
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 Abdinasir Abubakar	Manager, Infectious Hazard Prevention and Preparedness
Dr Henry Doctor	Coordinator, Information Systems for Health
Mr Maroun Karam	Administrative Services Officer
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 Samhour	Programme Area Manager, Country Health Emergency Preparedness and IHR
Mr Toby Boyd	Manager, Publishing, Editorial and Graphic Design
Ms Hala El Shazly	Administration Officer, Regional Director's Office
Ms Samah Abdel Aziz	Governing Bodies Officer