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## **Report of the sixth meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee to the Regional Director**

### **Introduction**

1. The Technical Advisory Committee to the Regional Director convened virtually for its sixth meeting on 15 February 2022, hosted from the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean in Cairo, Egypt. The objectives of the meeting were to solicit the advice of the Committee on:

- matters relating to the implementation and evaluation of WHO's strategic directions in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, in particular implementation of WHO's vision for public health in the Region, *Vision 2023*, and the related strategy;
- measures to strengthen the capacity of the Regional Office and country offices in support of Member States;
- policies and strategies for the development of technical cooperation among and between countries of the Region;
- means to engage key stakeholders from the health and non-health sectors in order to promote the concept of "health in all policies";
- any other topics referred by the Regional Director.

2. Nine members of the Committee participated in the meeting, along with relevant staff of the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. The meeting was chaired by the Regional Director.

3. During the meeting, participants were requested to discuss a number of key questions introduced through a series of presentations by senior members of WHO staff in the Region. The discussions included progress in implementing WHO's strategy for the Region, ongoing challenges and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, outcomes from the 68th session of the Regional Committee in October 2021 and proposed topics to be presented at the 69th session in October 2022.

### **Recommendations**

4. The Technical Advisory Committee made the following recommendations for WHO's work in the Region.

#### *General*

- While it is now helpful to focus on the challenges of a "post-COVID" age, the ongoing challenges from the pandemic and the risk of new variants should not be underestimated or understated.
- Accelerating vaccine production in the Region should be a top priority, recognizing that there may be a limited window of opportunity following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Research should also be a high priority, including in particular (1) the potential long-term consequences of COVID-19 disease and the broader consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for different age groups and (2) particular challenges in the Region including emergencies, mass gatherings and refugee health.
- Efforts to strengthen accountability for health among decision-makers in the Region should be redoubled.
- More attention should be given to systematically addressing the needs of young people, given the age profile of the Region.

*Health security*

- Support proposals to enhance health security with cost estimates for countries in different income brackets.
- Include members with expertise in sociology and psychology in the proposed Regional Commission on Health Security to help inform work on behavioural change and ensure a more holistic perspective.
- Focus on educating and training the health workforce as a critical element of health security, bearing in mind also that the COVID-19 pandemic may well have increased the challenge of retaining qualified workforce.
- Tackling misinformation is also critical and requires sustain strong focus as this will be a growing threat going forward.
- Integrated health surveillance – in contrast to vertically segregated surveillance of different diseases – is a long-term priority, given the strong links between communicable and noncommunicable diseases, as demonstrated in COVID-related mortality and morbidity. South Africa’s integrated surveillance approach during the pandemic represents a valuable model to study.

*Proposed topics for the 69th session of the Regional Committee*

- In general, Committee members expressed strong support for the proposed topics for the next Regional Committee session.
- Consider featuring experiences from other WHO regions. The level of ongoing work with, and learning from, other regions should be made clear among the material presented to Regional Committee.
- Consider featuring health system governance as a possible side event or exhibition topic. Supporting countries to strengthen governance is a prerequisite for managing evolving and increasing demands, and ensuring accountability.
- Emphasize the evidence base supporting every Regional Committee presentation and proposal.

## Annex 1

### List of participants

#### *Members of the Technical Advisory Committee*

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Jordan University of Science and Technology  
Advisor to HRH Princess Muna Al-Hussein for Health and Development and Vice President of the  
National Woman's Health Care Center  
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Dr Maha El-Rabbat  
Executive Director, Middle East and North Africa Health Policy Forum  
& WHO Special Envoy on COVID-19  
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Dr Mostafa Brahimi  
Parliamentarian  
Deputy Head of Social Sector  
Moroccan Parliament  
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Dr Jeffrey Braithwaite  
Professor of Health Systems Research  
Founding Director, Australian Institute of Health Innovation  
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Dr Abdallah Daar  
Emeritus Professor of Clinical Public Health; Global Health; and Surgery  
University of Toronto  
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CANADA

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Executive Director, COVID-19 Immunity Task Force  
Director and Associate Dean  
School of Population and Global Health (SPGH)  
Faculty of Medicine  
and Associate Vice-Principal (Global Policy and Innovation)  
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CANADA

Dr Mohamed Abdi Jama  
Former Assistant Director-General WHO  
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Dr Bagher Larijani  
Professor of Endocrinology and Internal Medicine  
Director and Chief Scientific Officer,  
Endocrinology and Metabolism Research Institute  
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Dr Ziad Memish  
Professor and Senior Consultant in Infectious Diseases  
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*Secretariat*

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean

Dr Rana Hajjeh, Director of Programme Management

Dr Christoph Hamelmann, Chef de Cabinet

Dr Sussan Bassiri, Director of Business Operations (BOS)

Dr Awad Mataria, Director, UHC/Health Systems (UHS)

Dr Yvan Hutin, Director, Communicable Disease Control (DCD)

Dr Arash Rashidian, Director, Science, Information and Dissemination (SID)

Dr Asmus Hammerich, Director, UHC/Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health (NMH)

Dr Dalia Samhouri, Programme Area Manager, Country Health Emergency Preparedness and International Health Regulations

Dr Rayana Ahmed Bou Haka, Manager, Country Cooperation and Collaboration

Ms Hala El Shazly, Administrative Officer, Regional Director's Office

Ms Samah Abdelaziz, Governing Bodies

Other relevant staff according to agenda item.