

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN  
Sixty-ninth Session  
Cairo, Egypt, 10–13 October 2022**

**October 2022**

**TOWARDS COUNTRY IMPACT: SUPPORTING MEMBER STATES IN  
ACCELERATING IMPLEMENTATION OF HEALTH-RELATED SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH JOINT ACTION BY UN COUNTRY TEAMS**

**Objectives of the event**

On 13 October 2022, a panel discussion will be held on supporting Member States to accelerate implementation of health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through joint action by UN country teams (UNCTs).

The objective of the event is to have an open and forward-looking dialogue on how to further strengthen joint UNCT support to Member States drawing on WHO's leading role.

**Background**

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) is the framework for planning and implementation at country level of all UN agencies. It aims to support countries' progress towards SDG targets and goals. It is guided by the five "P"s of the SDGs 2030: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnerships, and by a human rights approach, and articulates the requirements for sustainability, multisectoral collaboration, empowerment of communities and women and ensuring gender equality. Health occupies different positions within existing UNSDCFs for different countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, but is usually integrated in the social pillar in alignment with the five Ps.

Countries of the Region are not on track to achieve the health-related SDGs. Although there was progress in over half the 50 health-related SDG targets and indicators between 2015 and 2019, there is still a long way to go. Progress is required, among others, on reducing maternal, child and neonatal mortality, increasing vaccination coverage, reducing the number of cases of malaria and HIV and tackling increased mortality rates due to noncommunicable diseases.

WHO's regional vision, *Vision 2023*, and its global Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13) are focused on achieving the SDGs. The Regional Health Alliance is a partnership of 15 UN agencies which mirrors the Global Action Plan for Health Lives and Well-being (SDG3+ GAP) to help accelerate progress towards the health-related SDGs (SDG3+) in the Region. The partnership aims at collaborative action for country impact, reinforcing the efforts of UN country teams, guided by the UNSDCF.

There are several steps that would better position and reinforce the focus on health within UNSDCFs, including: comprehensive mapping of health sector stakeholders at the country level; capacity-building on common country analyses (CCAs) and UNSDCFs; technical support and backstopping from the regional level; and data compilation and analysis, and monitoring and reporting frameworks to identify challenges and approaches towards effective implementation.

WHO plays a leading role in coordinating work on health-related SDGs at country level within the overall framework of the UNCT and interaction with the national authorities. This includes, on the one hand, leading the joint effort on health of all UNCT agencies under the overall guidance of the UN Resident Coordinator, and on the other hand making joint UN support to the ministry of health more effective and inclusive. Expectations on WHO in this regard substantially increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many lessons learned from that time could improve future performance.

## **Challenges in the Region**

The Eastern Mediterranean Region faces many challenges towards progress on the health-related SDGs including the variable positioning of health and addressing SDG3+ in country UNSDCFs and coordination mechanisms between UN agencies. In addition, protracted humanitarian crises in several countries of the Region and the importance of mainstreaming of SDG3+ programming in such contexts are crucial concerns.

## **Expected outcomes**

- Expectations from national health authorities and UN partners regarding WHO's role in coordinating joint UNCT support to ministries of health are articulated, and areas for further improvement identified.
- The importance of multisectoral action for accelerating implementation of health-related SDGs is recognized among partners, maximizing opportunities to jointly support ministries of health.