

Update on the implementation of the WHO Transformation Agenda in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Introduction

1. Substantial progress has been made in implementation of the WHO transformation agenda in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, despite the challenges arising from ongoing conflicts and economic crises in many countries and territories. In the Region, internal transformation in WHO has been guided by the fourth pillar of *Vision 2023*,¹ which was anchored in WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13) 2019–2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has been implementing the transformation agenda and cascading it to country offices for enhanced country impact, with support from WHO headquarters. In 2024, the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly approved the Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 14) for 2025–2028² as a unique chance to create strong, future-ready health systems and, after the COVID-19 pandemic, to get back on track to reach the health-related SDGs.
2. On a global level, the work of the Agile Member States Task Group on Strengthening WHO's Budgetary, Programmatic and Financing Governance has made significant steps towards improving the performance and effectiveness of the Organization. At the 152nd session of the Executive Board, the Secretariat's implementation plan for reform was endorsed in decision EB152(16) (2023), reflecting WHO's efforts to improve efficiency in response to the needs of Member States.
3. Input towards the draft negotiating text of the WHO Pandemic Agreement was another element of WHO's response to needs, through the provision of enhanced support for ministerial teams and diplomatic missions from Member States. This support was manifested in formal meetings, regular consultations and informal briefings, enabling Member States of the Region to better voice their position and participate effectively in the negotiations.
4. Following decisions EB150(3) and WHA75(9) (2022) to embark on a process to consider proposed amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005), Member States, through the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (WGIHR), have had intensive discussions, briefings and consultations on various items. The seventh meeting of the WGIHR was held on 5–9 February 2024 to refine amendments to articles and annexes that were at an advanced stage of negotiation.³ Additional issues related to equity, collaboration, capacity-building and financing, as well as provisions related to governance and foundational articles of the Regulations, were also discussed.
5. Acknowledging the extensive work undertaken by countries, the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly on 27 May–1 June 2024 reached agreement on a package of critical amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) that will strengthen global preparedness, surveillance and

¹ Vision 2023. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/RD_Vision_2018_20675_en.pdf?ua=1&ua=1, accessed 25 March 2024).

² Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, Agenda item 17, 1 June 2024: Fourteenth General Programme of Work, 2025–2028. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (WHA77.16; https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA77/A77_16-en.pdf, accessed 14 June 2024).

³ Member States consider proposed amendments to the International Health Regulations with discussions on equity to continue [website]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/news/item/19-02-2024-member-states-consider-proposed-amendments-to-the-international-health-regulations-with-discussions-on-equity-to-continue>, accessed 21 March 2024).

response to public health emergencies (including pandemics).¹ The Health Assembly also made concrete commitments to completing negotiations on the much-needed global Pandemic Agreement within a year, by the World Health Assembly in 2025 or earlier.

Progress update

Embedding the Action for Results Group (ARG) action plan in the regional transformation roadmap for continuous improvement

6. WHO transformation in the Region is guided by the regional transformation roadmap. Its collaborative and bottom-up approach has been instrumental in creating a results-oriented culture, streamlining specific operational functions and upholding WHO values. The roadmap has 10 prioritized actions encompassing a range of activities in different categories to ensure a comprehensive transformation process in the Region, in alignment with the global transformation workstreams.

7. The 11th WHO Global Management Meeting in December 2022 led to the establishment of the ARG. The ARG acts as an accelerator of transformation, tasked directly by the WHO Director-General to identify the scope of areas requiring intensive action to strengthen the capacity of country offices and therefore enhance WHO's impact at country level. To fast-track the process of WHO transformation, the ARG set a comprehensive action plan comprising six main thematic areas, 95 action points and 20 targeted milestones. The ARG's country impact action plan has been embedded in the regional transformation roadmap.

8. The ARG's action plan is empowering WHO country offices through: strengthened and financed core predictable country presence (CPCP); delegation of authority to WHO Representatives; improved human resources management; streamlined planning and programme management; global mobility; end-to-end procurement and business processes; expanded participation for staff in decision-making; and improved and more open communication for staff across all levels of the Organization.

9. The ARG has achieved several important tasks since its establishment, including the signing of the Delegation of Authority (DoA) in May 2023 that empowers WHO Representatives to play their pivotal role in the countries they serve. The DoA covers the areas of programme management, financial management, procurement, human resources management, duty travel, resource mobilization, donor agreements and delegation. The CPCP recruitment process is also underway; the Director-General has committed to allocating US\$ 200 million in the current biennium to fund the recruitment of 400 prioritized posts, including 160 in the Eastern Mediterranean Region with a budget of US\$ 46 million. In addition, the first voluntary phase of the WHO mobility policy was completed in 2023; however, out of 18 positions at the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean advertised in the first voluntary mobility compendium, the Regional Office filled only two through this mechanism. Two new staff members joined from the WHO Regional Office for Africa, while five staff members left the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean for other offices: two to WHO headquarters, two to the Regional Office for Europe and one to the Regional Office for Africa. The low success rate of the mobility exercise is being analysed and the lessons learned will be applied in the next round.

10. The Regional Office's Department of Communications, Resource Mobilization and Partnerships (CRP) had identified critical capacity gaps to be addressed across country offices. The eight new CPCP positions prioritized within predictable funding (four positions in partnerships and resource mobilization, and four positions in communications and resource mobilization) will help in closing these gaps. This will also strengthen the regional CRP network and release the time of Regional

¹ World Health Assembly agreement reached on wide-ranging, decisive package of amendments to improve the International Health Regulations and sets date for finalizing negotiations on a proposed Pandemic Agreement [website]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/news/item/01-06-2024-world-health-assembly-agreement-reached-on-wide-ranging--decisive-package-of-amendments-to-improve-the-international-health-regulations--and-sets-date-for-finalizing-negotiations-on-a-proposed-pandemic-agreement>, accessed 2 June 2024).

Office staff who have been acting as de facto focal points for some country offices. As a result, the Regional Office's resource mobilization team can strengthen their focus on identifying new resources and partnership opportunities and increasing visibility to highlight country results and impact.

11. In line with the WHO Investment Round, and to better position the Region's budget centres in making a strong case for predictable and flexible funding – both directly at country level or through global allocations – the CRP department is collaborating with WHO country offices to (a) develop standardized value propositions, cases for support and associated external partner-facing products, and (b) equip and empower colleagues at country offices for effective storytelling and impactful communication.

Strengthening the three-level operating model

12. The Action for Results Task Force (ARTF) was established in June 2023 to translate the global ARG's actions, milestones and timelines into regional short- and mid-term action plans. The ARTF facilitated the ARG's first visit to the Region in July 2023, during which the ARG and ARTF discussed a wide range of internal issues in implementing the ARG's action plan, including how to expedite implementation of the newly signed DoA. The ARG also met with WHO Representatives in the Region to understand the impediments to the implementation of the country impact action plan.

13. The first WHO Representatives-led retreat was held in Cairo, Egypt, on 26–29 November 2023, with a focus on implementation of the ARG's recommendations. A Steering Committee comprising several WHO Representatives was established to plan the event, which was organized by the Regional Office and facilitated by Chef de Cabinet. The concept of a WHO Representatives-led retreat is in itself a transformative change that can serve as an example for other regions. WHO Representatives produced a set of recommendations, comprising 77 action points for implementation to ensure progress towards agile and fit-for-purpose country offices.

14. Engagement with WHO country offices in developing, implementing and evaluating the country cooperation strategies (CCSs) has been strengthened. Significant progress has been achieved since late 2022: two new CCSs were signed and three have reached the final draft stage, while seven others are in progress. The unified approach taken in the Region has improved the alignment of CCSs with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) and programme budget biennial planning. Concrete progress and quality improvement results were achieved in the development and implementation of CCSs through the introduction of the CCS Quality Management Matrix. The CCS development process has been further unified, standardized and adapted to the regional context, and includes a roadmap and tracking tools. The CCS Peer Support Group has lent capacity to operationalize these tools and to assess the quality of CCSs. In addition, the priorities of the valid CCSs have been mapped against GPW 13 outcomes and outputs and 2024–2025 priorities, to assess the alignment of priorities at all levels of the Organization.

15. As a major step in ensuring fit-for-purpose country offices in a rapidly changing environment, implementation of the 1047 baseline country functional review (CFR) recommendations has been accelerated, leaving only eight in progress (mostly related to the area of strategic alignment) as at the end of 2023. Following the reactivation of the Regional and Country Functional Review Committee in March 2023, and the introduction of a targeted CFR approach and development of the integrated CFR (iCFR) concept note, the first targeted CFR was conducted of the WHO Country Office in Iraq. The iCFR had a specific focus on transitioning from a humanitarian to development approach in the country and integrating CPCP in the review – making it the first CFR globally to take CPCP into consideration. Functional reviews of technical departments in the Regional Office were also conducted throughout 2023.

Enhancing leadership, organizational culture and the workplace environment

16. Leadership capacity in the Eastern Mediterranean Region has been improved by taking an institutional approach to identify the next generation of WHO managers to build them into effective leaders who are adept at dealing with managerial issues while retaining technical excellence. A set of leadership training sessions and courses have been developed. A successful collaboration with the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) to strengthen the skills, knowledge and capacities of WHO Representatives, Directors and emerging leaders for global health diplomacy, geostrategic health leadership and political acumen (tailored to the regional context) paved the way for the first phase of the training in 2023.

17. Training sessions have also been conducted in collaboration with other WHO regional offices. In 2023–2024, senior WHO staff from the African, European and Eastern Mediterranean regions participated in the Pathways to Leadership for Health Transformation Programme, developed by the Regional Office for Africa, to strengthen health leadership skills and transform knowledge into tangible, practical outcomes. In addition, a WHO Leadership Dialogue on Global Health Diplomacy was conducted in collaboration with the Regional Office for Europe.

18. To ensure a comprehensive transformation process, the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is carrying out a range of activities to catalyse positive changes in the workplace. Initiatives to strengthen WHO values and ensure a collaborative and results-focused organizational culture include respectful workplace training as well as diversity, equity and inclusion measures. WHO's commitment to institutionalizing zero tolerance for any forms of sexual misconduct led to the inclusion of preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PRSEAH) in the respectful workplace training sessions for WHO staff. In addition, the accountability framework for prevention of and response to sexual misconduct¹ was disseminated to all WHO personnel across the Region during 2023–2024.

19. To contribute to the organizational goal of ensuring a healthy, respectful and inclusive workplace, a Regional Staff Counsellor was appointed in mid-2022 to design, develop and implement a staff mental health and well-being programme. Progress made in 2023 includes the United Nations (UN) system-wide mental health and well-being strategy and implementation plan,² the first Joint Inspection Unit review of mental health and well-being policies and practices in the UN system, and dissemination of the *WHO guidelines on mental health at work*.³

20. Six countries in the Region that were identified as high-risk (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen) have received newly recruited PRSEAH coordinators, and Palestine has a coordinator working on PRSEAH under the emergencies programme. PRSEAH coordinators have undertaken a series of global and regional capacity-building and orientation sessions to be better equipped to deliver their functions.

21. Since May 2022, the Regional Ombudsperson has been functioning as an independent and neutral interlocutor whose primary role is to provide confidential, impartial assistance to staff members and other members of the workforce who voluntarily approach the Office. In 2023, the Ombudsperson's Office had a total of 235 visitors and facilitated discussions between colleagues, as well as between

¹ Preventing and responding to sexual misconduct: WHO's three-year strategy 2023–2025. Accountability framework. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/366299/WHO-DGO-PRS-2023.2-eng.pdf>, accessed 10 June 2024). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

² United Nations System mental health and well-being strategy for 2024 and beyond. New York: United Nations; 2024 (https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_system_mental_health_and_well_being_strategy_for_2024.pdf, accessed 25 March 2024).

³ WHO guidelines on mental health at work. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 (<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/363177/9789240053052-eng.pdf?sequence=1>, accessed 14 June 2024). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

supervisors and supervisees. Various training sessions were held in 2023, including “Co-creating a Respectful Workplace”, “Respectful Communication”, “Setting Healthy Boundaries in the Workplace” and “Resilience Training”.

22. The Region has seen slight improvement in gender parity and the diversity of WHO staff. The number of female staff across all staff categories rose from 951 (44%) in 2022 to 972 (45%) in 2023, while women in professional and higher grades remained at 37%. The Regional Office’s workforce has a fair amount of diversity with half of the staff in fixed-term professional and higher categories from other regions in 2023, and 49% in 2022.

WHO strategic leadership and partnerships to strengthen its impact on health in the Region

23. A network of SDG focal persons was established for the first time in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The network aims to strengthen WHO’s lead role and technical support for the acceleration of progress on the health-related SDGs in countries. The SDG focal persons will participate in the multi-departmental and multisectoral government platforms for implementing the health-related SDGs, and collaborate with UN country teams within the context of the UNSDCF’s and Joint Work Plans.

24. A UNSDCF study review was undertaken to establish linkages between the UNSDCF’s of eight countries in the Region (Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Somalia) and the Regional Health Alliance’s Joint Action Plan 2022–2023. The findings and recommendations will guide the development of the Alliance’s 2024–2025 plan, with an evidence-informed country focus to address health priorities.

25. An end-term review of the Regional Health Alliance’s Joint Action Plan 2022–2023 was conducted to assess progress and challenges. The review included an online survey for the 17 members of the Alliance, alongside a mapping of the member UN agencies’ health-related collaborative projects at the regional level. The review included regional- and country-level projects and actions implemented by UN organizations and was segregated by the scope of work, modality, level of implementation, targets and partners involved, and the implementing period. Both processes are feeding into the plan of work for the 2024–2025 biennium.

26. A high-level panel discussion on the Regional Health Alliance took place during the 70th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in 2023, with participation of the regional directors of UN organizations. It was the first time in the history of the Regional Committee that eight UN regional directors had come together to discuss their joint support to countries on the implementation of the health-related SDGs in the Region.

27. There has been increased engagement with the UN Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) for the Arab States within its framework of work on the Issue-based Coalitions, which is currently in the process of alignment with the new investment pathways to deliver the SDGs, namely the "6 Transitions" and its enablers. Outreach has been extended to the RCPs for Africa and for Asia and the Pacific to cover other countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Engagement with the regional UN coordination mechanisms included participation in the UN Peer Support Groups (PSGs) reviewing the Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and the UNSDCF’s, in addition to regular communication and coordination with the RCP secretariats on issues related to the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development (Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, Arab States Forum for Sustainable Development, Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development) and the Arab Sustainable Development Report.

Engaging and strengthening collaboration with Member States

28. The Regional Office continuously supports national governing bodies focal points and maintains a consistent channel of communication to form a deeper working relationship. Increased engagement has been evident in various governance processes, such as nominations for elective posts, membership of the Executive Board and Regional Committee Subcommittees, and the selection of Regional Committee officers. This systematic approach allows Member States to receive relevant information and briefings in advance, enabling them to effectively participate through consolidated regional statements.

29. Initiatives that are instrumental in promoting effective participation and collaboration have been implemented. Leadership skills training in Global Health Policy and Diplomacy has been conducted in two cohorts to strengthen governance, transparency and accountability. The training aims to improve the representation of the vision and priorities of Member States of the Region in the Secretariat's work. It signifies an important step towards building capacities and enhancing engagement with WHO's governing bodies processes.

30. The Regional Office's Translation and Interpretation Services unit has integrated cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) solutions into its workflows, ensuring enhanced efficiency in supporting governing bodies meetings. Harnessing the power of tools such as Phrase, a sophisticated computer-assisted translation tool, in tandem with its proprietary neural machine translation engine, has enabled the unit to streamline workflows and elevate accuracy. Adopting new technologies such as AI has allowed the Organization to remain informed and up-to-date in this fast-changing world.

Cultivating a culture of transparency, compliance, knowledge and information-sharing

31. A culture of transparency, compliance, knowledge and information sharing has been achieved through fostering open communication channels, implementing risk and compliance frameworks, and building strong knowledge-sharing platforms. By prioritizing these aspects, the Organization has been able to better empower its workforce, strengthen risk management and ultimately deliver on its mission more effectively.

32. In response to the evolving risks, the Regional Office's Department of Compliance and Risk Management devised a comprehensive, three-tiered strategic approach to enhance risk management practices and promote a culture that values risk awareness. Key actions include integrating risk management into operational planning, addressing principal risks such as sexual misconduct and fraud/corruption, and conducting comprehensive reviews to improve internal controls. Customized training materials have been developed, and engagements with non-State actors are being managed effectively to promote transparency and compliance within the Organization. The Regional Compliance and Risk Management Committee, chaired by the Regional Director, meets regularly, forming a critical link to the Global Risk Management Committee and building on the work of local compliance and risk management committees at country level. It has facilitated a cohesive and comprehensive approach to risk management, ensuring consistency and effectiveness across all levels of WHO.

33. A comprehensive assessment of the potential risks, accompanied by the implementation of robust mitigation strategies and strict compliance measures, serves as the cornerstone for ensuring the successful execution of the ARG's regional action plan. The enhanced DoA to WHO Representatives enables country offices to play a crucial role in supporting impactful actions and managing risks. Key strategies include expediting recruitment processes for CPCP positions in country offices, enhancing staff competencies through training, strengthening compliance and assurance mechanisms, and providing reference materials and guidelines for operational functions.

34. Continuously measuring and understanding risk culture has been a cornerstone of WHO's strategic focus, fostering a proactive approach to risk management through innovative tools and techniques. By nurturing a network of skilled compliance and risk champions and strengthening collaboration with

strategic partners, the Region has advanced its risk awareness and responsiveness and fostered trust and synergy. Moving forward, the Global Risk Management Committee's review of principal risks and the enhanced regional dashboards and platforms signal a commitment to sustaining a culture of vigilance and preparedness for effectively addressing emerging risks that could impede WHO's pursuit of the goals of GPW 14. Collaboration between the Regional Office and country offices has been intensified through comprehensive administrative reviews and streamlined ex post facto reviews, using the Compliance and Accountability Platform, leading to enhanced regional programme implementation and more efficient resource allocation. Internal audit opinion in the Eastern Mediterranean Region has significantly improved over the past three years, reflecting progress in fostering transparency and accountability.

Realizing the potential of results-based management and pioneering evaluations of WHO's support to countries

35. The Regional Office aims to improve accountability for results in the Region through the application of a strengthened results-based management approach. In 2023, following the recommendations of an independent evaluation of WHO's results-based management framework,¹ the Regional Office designed and launched a capacity-building programme on the subject, including results-based budgeting, reporting and evaluation. The programme takes a hands-on approach based on country-specific case-studies, co-facilitated by corresponding technical experts from the Regional Office. Staff from eight WHO country offices and government focal points participated in the programme to gain knowledge and skills that would be applied in joint programme planning, reporting and evaluation. The programme received a favourable response, and it was reported that other regional offices expressed an interest in replicating the initiative in their regions. The programme is set to continue in the new biennium, with further implementation in the Regional Office and the remaining 14 countries and territories of the Region.

36. Learning from previous rounds of strategic and operational planning, a unified approach of engaging technical teams at the Regional Office in developing more cohesive operational workplans and country support plans was introduced as part of operational planning for Programme budget 2024–2025, building on the country priorities identified in 2022 for the extension of the GPW 13. There are three significant elements in this approach: (i) providing strategic technical briefings to feed into the consultative planning process at country level; (ii) developing a catalogue of standard products and services for higher quality workplans that better facilitate the later reporting; and (iii) conducting one-on-one dialogues between technical teams in the Regional Office and country offices to ensure support in delivering the planned results can be mobilized by the respective teams in the Regional Office and/or headquarters, as and where applicable.

37. A new policy on the strategic management of resources was developed by the Regional Office to effectively strengthen WHO's country presence. The policy capitalizes on the principles of flexibility, predictability, transparency and accountability for the management and allocation of resources in the Region.

38. In 2023, the Eastern Mediterranean Region took a leading role in implementing independent evaluations of WHO's contribution at the country level, starting with Iraq,² Djibouti³ and Tunisia. These evaluations were commissioned jointly with the Evaluation unit in WHO headquarters and undertaken with the active participation of country offices, the respective Member States and other stakeholders. WHO's contributions in individual countries were reviewed in a holistic manner, taking into

¹ Independent evaluation of WHO's results-based management (RBM) framework (2023): final report, WHO Evaluation Office – January 2023. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 ([https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/independent-evaluation-of-who-s-results-based-management-\(rbm\)-framework-\(2023\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/independent-evaluation-of-who-s-results-based-management-(rbm)-framework-(2023))), accessed 16 July 2024).

² WHO contribution in Iraq: evaluation report. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/who-contribution-in-iraq>), accessed 2 June 2024).

³ WHO contribution in Djibouti: evaluation report. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/who-contribution-in-djibouti>), accessed 2 June 2024). Licence: CC BY-NC

consideration national priorities and needs, as well as national and international partners' contributions, with a view to influence policy and operational decisions and to re-strategize WHO's support to countries in promoting the national public health agenda and the well-being of the population. The Evaluation unit has showcased these ongoing evaluations to other regions and, as a result, this has inspired other regions to embark on similar evaluations in the new biennium.

Transformation governance

39. At its 154th session in January 2024, the Executive Board appointed Dr Hanan Balkhy as WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Since assuming office in February 2024, the Regional Director has been strongly supporting the implementation of the WHO transformation agenda.

40. The establishment of a Transformation unit in 2021 has enhanced the Regional Office's role in facilitating and monitoring transformation initiatives in the Region and in reporting these activities regularly to staff and Member States. The Regional Transformation Team, formed in 2022, has been working collaboratively with the senior management team at the Regional Office to accelerate WHO transformation in the Region.

41. To communicate change in the Organization and keep staff connected with and contributing to the transformation agenda in the Region, the Transformation unit has enhanced its communication through several channels. WHO transformation newsletters¹ for the Region are published three times per year and distributed to all staff in the Region, WHO headquarters, other regional offices and Member States to encourage inclusivity and increase visibility on the transformative work of WHO offices in the Region. A regional transformation web page² was launched in October 2022 to communicate updates to external audiences and provide publications and audiovisual materials. The EMRO Change Network channel on Workplace was officially launched in September 2023 to further drive transformation at WHO offices by amplifying new practices and innovative ideas, highlighting successful change initiatives, and sharing new knowledge and information from the Region. A SharePoint-based intranet page was launched in March 2024 to act as the main hub for sharing all transformation-related information to WHO staff.

42. Country offices are being encouraged to establish country transformation teams. Since 2022, the WHO country office in Jordan has been piloting the first country transformation team in the Region to reduce working in silos and realign communication within the office. A session to share the experience of the Jordan country office was attended by staff from WHO country offices in Bahrain, Egypt and Yemen, emphasizing the importance of commitment and engagement to accelerate transformation at country level.

Next steps

43. As the directing and coordinating authority on international health, WHO needs to continuously evolve and advance change to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable in the modern world. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, efforts to strengthen leadership, innovate partnerships and streamline processes have been geared specifically towards empowering country offices and making a measurable impact in countries. By keeping countries at the centre of its work, the Regional Office will be able to make more substantial progress in the Region, in line with the WHO transformation agenda.

¹ WHO transformation newsletter [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (<https://www.emro.who.int/who-transformation/information-resources/index.html#newsletter>, accessed 16 July 2024).

² WHO transformation [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (<https://www.emro.who.int/who-transformation/index.html>, accessed 16 July 2024).

44. Implementation of some key initiatives in the Region requires continuous efforts from and active participation of all relevant stakeholders. Country-level engagement is needed to strengthen this collaborative work.

45. Priorities for the next phase of the WHO transformation agenda in the Region will be directed towards the main thematic areas outlined in the action plan of the ARG. The ARTF will continue to work alongside the ARG and provide support. In addition, follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations from the 2023 retreat of the WHO Representatives will be carried out to keep track of progress.

46. To accelerate transformation efforts and roll out new activities for wider staff engagement, action will be undertaken to expedite and fine-tune the transformation processes in the Region, including further collaboration with country offices to promote the ongoing shift in WHO's culture, introduce new ways of working, create a more enabling environment for WHO staff, and encourage the establishment of country transformation teams to replicate the successful pilot project.