

A high-level meeting on “Saving the lives of mothers and children: accelerating progress towards achieving MDGs 4 and 5 in the Eastern Mediterranean Region” was organized by the WHO Regional Office, in collaboration with UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund, to prioritize the health of women and children. The event took place from 29 to 30 January 2013, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. It was attended by leading figures, including high-level officials from Member States, key partners, parliamentarians, ministers of health, higher education and planning and representatives of regional bodies and stakeholders.

Meeting objectives

The two-day event provided a platform for a leadership dialogue to:

- increase the profile and commitment to maternal, adolescent, and child health (including newborns) with a focus on equity;
- facilitate policy dialogue for accelerated action towards the achievement of universal access to maternal, adolescent, newborn and child health services in the Region;
- discuss and agree on evidence-based packages for care and implementation strategies across the continuum of care;
- establish a high-level regional commission for women and children. The commission will track progress in implementation, advocate and mobilize resources, and hold countries accountable for improving the lives of women and children.

The outcomes of the meeting included: the increased commitment of leaders in the Region to improve maternal and child health in agreement with emerging global targets; the development of a regional declaration on maternal and child health with defined commitments; establishment of a regional commission on maternal and child health; agreement on practical coordination mechanisms to accelerate progress towards MDGs 4 and 5 in the Region; and increased commitment of partners to support accelerated action for maternal and child health in the Region.

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