

I would like to welcome you to these two vital back-to-back events focusing on the enhancement of integrated disease surveillance by the World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. As we gather today, both in-person and virtually, we bring together our shared commitment, knowledge and experience to protect the health and well-being of our communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need for effective public health surveillance. It is a core component of health information systems and public health intelligence, detecting potential public health threats and monitoring disease morbidity and mortality to guide prevention and control measures. Effective disease surveillance and response not only saves lives, but also offers a high return on financial investment by helping us to potentially avoid large-scale economic disruption from epidemics and pandemics.

In recognition of this, the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean adopted a resolution in October 2021 urging the Member States of the Region to implement effective, integrated disease surveillance systems by the end of 2025. Effective IDS entails good governance and multisectoral coordination to organize the convergence of disease and programme-specific surveillance systems towards integration. The Regional Strategy outlines ten areas of work that come with indicators to characterize the baseline and goal. I would like to remind our esteemed delegates of their commitments towards integrated disease surveillance, and ask for their continuous support and engagement in achieving this goal.

Our first event, the Regional Meeting on Integrated Disease Surveillance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, aims to address the challenges highlighted in the Regional Committee technical paper and set out in the proposed regional strategy for integrated disease surveillance. This strategy will guide Member States in strengthening and integrating their national surveillance systems, feeding into regional and global efforts to strengthen collective public health intelligence. Our goal is to ensure that integrated disease surveillance strategies align with and support integrated national health information systems, creating a robust and efficient network for the early detection of, and response to public health threats.

Following the regional meeting, we will focus on the practical aspects of electronic disease surveillance during the workshop on DHIS2. Under the direction of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Technical Working Group, the workshop will help our Member States harness the power of technology to implement integrated disease surveillance systems. We will explore the capabilities of DHIS2, a widely-adopted platform for disease surveillance, and how it can be

customized to meet the unique needs of our Region. The workshop will feature hands-on sessions, demonstrations, and opportunities for participants to provide input on customizing DHIS2 modules and functionalities.

As WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, I am confident that our collective efforts during these two events will not only pave the way for the successful implementation of integrated disease surveillance in our Region, but will also foster stronger regional collaboration and knowledge-sharing. Let us work together in the spirit of unity, cooperation and mutual learning, to build a healthier and safer future for our people, to achieve WHO's regional vision of "Health for all by all".

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