



Oman's Minister of Health presided over the launch of the WHO collaborating centre. Photo: WHO Cairo, 22 February 2022 – Oman's central public health laboratories have been designated a WHO collaborating centre for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases.

The official launch took place on 16 February 2022 and was presided over by Dr Ahmed Al-Saeedi, Oman's Minister of Health, who ascribed the importance of this designation to the support and contribution it will make to WHO's efforts in building regional and national laboratory diagnostic capacities.

"As the first designated WHO collaborating centre in the Region for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases with a focus on laboratory diagnostic capacity, it is a great opportunity for Oman's central public health laboratories to showcase their capability to support and work with WHO to fulfil the agreed objectives and activities," said Dr Al-Saeedi.

"The Ministry of Health will provide all necessary support to the central public health laboratories in order to implement the agreed workplan, and we will continue to rely on the WHO's technical support in the months and years to come."

WHO collaborating centres are institutions such as universities, hospitals, research facilities, academies or ministries that have been designated to carry out activities in support of WHO's programmes. There are over 800 WHO collaborating centres in more than 80 countries around the world, and with the designation of Oman's central public health laboratories as a WHO collaborating centre they are joining a strong and expanding network.

This designation comes as a result of years of cooperation between the central public health laboratories and WHO. Oman has been very supportive of regional laboratory diagnostic activities in recent years, including training on molecular techniques in RT-PCR, cell culture and virus isolation, and the sequencing of influenza and other respiratory diseases. They are also supporting neighbouring countries to investigate outbreaks and analyse biological samples for arboviral diseases and other high-threat pathogens.



Oman has been very supportive of regional laboratory diagnostic activities in recent years. Photo: WHO “The current pandemic has highlighted the importance of enhancing regional and national laboratory diagnostic capacities for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases to enhance preparedness for future pandemics,” said Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO Representative to Oman.

“I am confident that this new collaborating centre will fulfil its mandate in supporting countries in the Region and contribute to WHO’s programme of work and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

As a WHO collaborating centre, the central public health laboratories will undertake 3 key objectives: support WHO to respond to outbreaks of high-threat pathogens, including outbreaks of arboviruses, viral haemorrhagic fevers, and novel and emerging infectious diseases; organize

and conduct practical training courses and workshops on laboratory diagnostics for emerging and re-emerging diseases; and provide technical support and conduct laboratory capacity-building to strengthen and expand the Region's laboratory network for influenza and other respiratory virus.

The Regional Office for the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the Middle East/North Africa is one of the partners supporting Oman's central public health laboratories. The Director and Deputy Director of the Regional Office attended the launching events.

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