WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Dr Hanan Balkhy (fourth from left) is pictured next to WHO Representative to Saudi Arabia (to her left) and members of the WHO Saudi Arabia workforce. Photo credit: WHO Saudi Arabia/M. Ahmed

21 March 2024 – Dr Hanan Balkhy visited Saudi Arabia in February–March 2024, early in her tenure as WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. Her aim was to engage with local stakeholders, focusing on priority areas for WHO such as human resource development and supply chain management.

She met with Minister of Education His Excellency Mr Yousef bin Abdullah Al-Benyan to discuss future joint initiatives to enhance health workforce capacity in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. The aim is to accelerate actions to address health workforce shortages, imbalances, and capacities to ensure access to quality health services, towards both universal health coverage and health security.

It was agreed that there is a regional need to increase investment in the health workforce. It is also vital to scale up the health workforce to deliver both essential public health functions and emergency response. Efforts must also build the Region's health workforce for the future as well as unite the health workforce across the Region.

Cocreating sustainable solutions with the Ministry of Education, for use within and beyond the Region, to produce well-trained and capacitated health workers can have a meaningful and lasting impact on people's lives.

Dr Balkhy's visit also included talks with the Commission for Health Specialties, to explore potential collaborations with WHO. These discussions focused on developing an action plan to address various human resource challenges in health care, such as workforce planning, patient safety, health leadership, health diplomacy and board certification. There is a need to build the capacity of health workers to strengthen the provision of essential health services.

To improve supply chain management in the Region, Dr Balkhy engaged with the National Unified Procurement Company to consider opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration in this critical area. The goal is to make positive changes to promote effective supply chain management across the Region, to better meet the health needs of populations.

The Regional Director ended her visit by calling in on the WHO Country Office in Saudi Arabia to engage with the workforce. She gathered colleagues for a casual meeting to learn about the office's priorities and programmes. She expressed confidence in the team's ability to continue to make a positive impact, setting the stage for ongoing cooperation under her leadership in the coming years.

Tuesday 14th of May 2024 01:31:43 AM