

The Regional Committee,

Recognizing that blindness and visual impairment are important public health problems in the Region,

Concerned at the ever-increasing magnitude of the problem of visual loss, a considerable percentage of which is avoidable,

Mindful of the great socio-economic and health benefits resulting from preventing visual disability,

1. **EXPRESSES** its appreciation for the progress made in several countries in the implementation of national programmes for the prevention of blindness;
2. **URGES** Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean Region to:
  - 2.1 pursue the establishment or strengthening of national blindness prevention programmes;
  - 2.2 gather accurate data on the magnitude of the problem of visual loss and its causes;
  - 2.3 develop mechanisms to collaborate effectively with interested non-governmental organizations and institutions concerned with blindness control, and coordinate their input to national programmes;
  - 2.4 consider setting a target for eliminating the cataract surgery backlog within one decade;
3. **REQUESTS** the Regional Director to:
  - 3.1 assist countries technically in the assessment of the magnitude of the problem of blindness and its causes, and to make available models for the evaluation of national blindness prevention programmes;
  - 3.2 develop and disseminate technical guidelines and training materials on the prevention of avoidable visual loss;
  - 3.3 continue to inform the Regional Committee, through his Annual Report, of blindness prevention and control activities carried out by Member States;
4. **INVITES** nongovernmental organizations to continue to collaborate with WHO and national authorities to provide support to blindness prevention as a part of primary health care.