



26 January 2019 – A regional expert consultation on establishing an early warning system and communicating health messages during air pollution episodes was organized by the WHO Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action, in collaboration with the Department of Health Protection and Promotion of the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, on 24–25 February 2019 in Amman, Jordan.

The opening session was inaugurated on Sunday, 24 February 2019 by Dr Ahmad Al-Mandhri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. In his opening address, he said that this expert consultation would achieve its objectives by adopting a regional framework for a model communication system to transmit public health messages on air pollution and health with a special focus on episodes of pollution. The framework will serve as part of the regional plan of action for implementation of the “Road map for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution 2017–2022”, addressing the urgent public health need to respond to the negative impact of air pollution and climate change.

The consultation reviewed global experiences and those of countries in the Region regarding the existing systems for air quality monitoring and communication, and to delineate a regional framework of communication and early warning systems to transmit public health messages on air pollution and health (i.e., how to communicate health risks messages to the public and the health sector during air pollution episodes). The meeting discussed how to inform policy-makers and the general public on the extent of population exposure to the negative health impacts of poor air quality, strengthening the health sector with alerts and tools to facilitate engagement with other sectors to respond to air pollution episodes, and raising the awareness of all stakeholders on the long-term health effects of air pollution. The consultation also reviewed the evidence on the impacts of air pollution on the health of people with communicable and noncommunicable diseases with a special focus on sand and dust in the Region.

The consultation was attended by over 30 experts from the WHO Regional Office and country offices, as well as regional and international experts from Cyprus, Canada and India.

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