

Speech of Dr Mahmoud Fikri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, to the 140th Executive Board

24 January 2017

Your Excellencies,

Today, I'm very honoured and privileged to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Executive Board members for supporting my nomination by the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean and for giving me this great opportunity for the post of the Regional Director for the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Your Excellencies,

Let me start by expressing my deep appreciation and sincere gratitude to the Director-General Dr Margaret Chan for her great support and for giving me the opportunity to visit many Regional Offices under her guidance and direction which was undoubtedly a rewarding experience for me. I would like also to thank Dr Ala Alwan who has led the Region for the last 5 years with competence and confidence and for the great efforts he made for the Region.

In my statement during the Regional Committee last October I highlighted some challenges and presented some priorities to be taken into account, in order to enable the Region to overcome these challenges. I here commit to act immediately and work even harder to introduce the proposed changes I advocated for and all possible efforts must be mobilized and made available immediately in order to find appropriate solutions to these challenges, actions must start now.

Here I promise to put WHO on the front line to provide the necessary technical and managerial support to all Member States in the Region by working with them closely. I believe no tangible changes can be made if we are far away from the areas where these changes are needed most.

Fortunately, WHO has the technical know-how and the variable equipped to respond to the needs of countries. The General Programme of Work 2014–2019 and the detailed biennium programme budget identify major priority areas for countries that WHO supports as technical work, the vision is to fill the gaps and further strengthen and develop the 5 top priority areas which will be the main agenda during my term. These include:

- tackling emergencies
- strengthening health systems
- controlling communicable and noncommunicable diseases
- reducing maternal and child mortality
- effectively addressing inequities through focusing on social determinants of health.

However, in the coming 5 years, I will also put greater emphasis on some specific areas that are negatively affecting our Region, including achieving complete eradication of poliomyelitis in our Region, which is a top priority for me, and I will give my full support to human resource development, including the management and leadership programme, which is another priority for me. Progress towards universal health coverage in all countries of the Region will be my main intervention for health system development and the Sustainable Development Goals will represent a rich platform for planning and implementing health programmes in the coming 5 years.

For these purposes, the role of the Regional Office and the country offices will be more responsive to the needs of Member States through better utilization of available resources, recruitment of qualified expertise and ensuring a transparent and competent work environment. My commitment is to increase the delegation of authorities to technical staff in the Regional office and at country level to encourage competition, creativity, innovation and excellence.

In addition, my duty is to exert all possible efforts to improve internal coordination within the WHO to act as one entity across the level of the Organization.

Similarly, I will not spare any possibility to work with other United Nations sister agencies, developmental partners and nongovernmental organizations on related matters such as the Sustainable Development Goals and UN Political Declaration on Noncommunicable diseases and International Health Regulations and different global strategies plans and framework.

Your Excellencies,

As the Regional Director, I give very high respect for any guidance received from the Executive Board and esteemed colleagues, I commit myself to forging stronger cooperation with all WHO Member States and dedicate my experience, knowledge, effort to serve all countries equally.

Finally, in closing, please allow me to extend my sincere thanks to all WHO staff and secretaries especially those who I had chance to meet with and to his Excellency the Minister of Health Abdul Rahman Mohammed Al Oweis and to his Excellency Mr Obeid Al Zaabi, the Ambassador for the United Arab Emirates here in Geneva, and the other staff at the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates.

Thank you.

Tuesday 7th of May 2024 05:34:04 PM