

24 November 2022 – This week, the world is marking World Antimicrobial Awareness Week with a call for policy-makers to encourage health workers and the general public to adopt best practices to prevent the emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections and for all sectors to encourage the prudent use of antimicrobial medicines and to strengthen preventive measures to address antimicrobial resistance (AMR) under the One Health approach.

Highlighting the theme “Preventing antimicrobial resistance together”, World Antimicrobial Awareness Week this year focuses on the global AMR threat and how to mobilize collective action to respond to it.

Antimicrobial resistance – often called the silent pandemic – represents an ongoing global challenge that is threatening recent gains in human and animal health and welfare, the environment, food and nutrition security and safety, and economic growth and development. This silent pandemic causes at least 1.3 million human deaths every year.

Despite its huge toll in WHO’s Eastern Mediterranean Region, addressing the threat has often been overshadowed by other competing public health priorities, especially in emergency settings.

“We are now at a crossroads. If we do not control and stop the misuse and overuse of antimicrobial medicines, it will become increasingly difficult or impossible to treat simple infections in the future. We MUST act now,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

To address AMR, WHO works closely with partner agencies dealing with animal and environmental health through a One Health approach. National, regional and global political commitments in the implementation of One Health action need to be strengthened to control the spread of AMR and prevent its impact on human, animal, environmental health, economic growth and development, and food and nutrition security and safety.

Since adoption of the “Global action plan on antimicrobial resistance” at the May 2015 World Health Assembly, our Region has achieved several important milestones. All countries have

developed national AMR action plans and reported data from surveillance of antimicrobial consumption to the WHO Global Antimicrobial Surveillance System. More than 70% of the Eastern Mediterranean countries have also established national infection prevention and control programmes and these continue to be strengthened across the Region.

“While these achievements are to be celebrated, we need to do much more. Let us work together in the spirit of our regional vision of Health for All by All to actively counter the growing deadly AMR threat to save our future generations,” Dr Al-Mandhari added.

To renew the commitment of global leaders, enhance international cooperation and accelerate action to address AMR, a third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance is being held in Muscat, Oman, on 24–25 November 2022. High-level participation will include ministers of health, agriculture, animal health, environment, and finance, as well as policy-makers, key global experts, and representatives from the private sector, civil society, research institutions, and multilateral organizations.

Countries will be invited to endorse the Muscat Ministerial Manifesto and commit to reviewing, updating or revising AMR national action plans in line with the One Health approach. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme, WHO and the World Organization for Animal Health, collectively known as the Quadripartite, will provide the necessary sector-specific technical support and normative and policy guidance.

### **Related link**

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