



The regular regional meetings of Eastern Mediterranean/Arab States national ethics and bioethics committees bring together representatives of national bodies to share their thoughts and experiences in relation to bioethical issues. The third meeting was held in Muscat, Oman, on 14–15 June 2023. The meeting was jointly organized by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office in Beirut in cooperation with the Omani National Bioethics Committee and hosted by Sultan Qaboos University.

The objectives of the meeting were to: present and discuss methods of regional collaboration, with a special focus on fostering national ethics/bioethics committees; discuss and suggest strategies to strengthen linkages between bioethics committees and policy-makers (ministries of health, education, and science and technology); share experiences; deliberate on current issues such as the ethics and governance of artificial intelligence, the right to science and ethics in the time of climate change; discuss the outcomes of the last global bioethics summit that took place in Lisbon, Portugal in 2022; and plan for the upcoming summit planned to take place during April 2024 in San Marino.

The meeting was attended by participants from Bahrain, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territory, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to representatives from WHO's headquarters, Regional Office and Oman country office and the UNESCO offices in Beirut and Qatar.

The welcome address was given by His Highness Sayyid Dr Fahad Bin Al Julanda Al Said, Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University. Other keynote speakers included Dr Jean Jabbour, WHO Representative in Oman, Dr Arash Rashidian, WHO's Director for Science, Information and Dissemination in the Region, Salah Khaled, Director of UNESCO's Doha office, Dr Seiko Sugita of UNESCO/Arab States, and Dr Ahmed Mandil from WHO's Regional Office.

Over the two days, participants deliberated on the various topics presented, including the right to science and an inclusive society; national ethics and bioethics committees in the Arab States/Eastern Mediterranean Region: capacity development and policy dialogues from national and regional perspectives; enhanced cooperation among national ethics and bioethics committees; the ethics of climate change and pollution; the ethics and governance of digital technologies, including AI; and the ethics of social measures and policy responses to health and social emergencies.

The participants agreed with a proposal by the Omani National Bioethics Committee to host the Global Bioethics Summit in 2026 in Muscat. This will be further discussed by the WHO/UNESCO Steering Committee.

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