

The theme of World Health Day this year is “International Health Security” and the slogan “Invest in health, build a safer future” is of particular relevance to our region.

The WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region is prone to emergencies, both natural and manmade. Currently, several countries are coping with conflict and the aftermath of natural disaster. A number of diseases threaten health in the Region, including avian influenza, malaria and HIV/AIDS, while environmental degradation increases daily.

WHO is working in close collaboration with the many stakeholders concerned to address such challenges in order to achieve collective security from disease and protect global health. We must continue to expand our horizons, to work not only with governments but also international organizations, civil society and the business community if we are to face together the various health and security challenges.

Threats to health know no borders. In an age of global trade and travel, new and existing diseases can cross national borders and threaten our collective security with ease. Only through strong collaboration among developed and developing countries, can we contain this threat—collaboration focused on information sharing, using all the communication channels available, and strengthening of the public health system and of surveillance.

The revised International Health Regulations will come into force this June. Through the implementation of the Regulations we can together build and strengthen effective mechanisms for outbreak alert and response at both national and international levels.

International health security is everyone’s dream. To become a reality it requires investment on our part. Let’s all work together to invest in health and build a safer future.

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