

Introduction

In accordance with Decision No.3 of the Fifty-ninth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean Region in 2012 it was decided that the recently introduced practice of arranging technical meetings immediately prior to the Regional Committee should continue and be open to the representatives of all members of the Committee.

1. Pooled vaccine procurement: review of progress to date

In response to previous Regional Committee resolutions and requests of Member States, WHO has taken a series of important steps, working closely with the UNICEF Supply Division and other partners, to establish a pooled vaccine procurement system that will help all interested middle-income countries in the Region to access new vaccines of good quality at affordable prices. In June 2013, a technical intercountry workshop for the establishment of such a system was held at which progress towards establishing the system was shared with country experts and country-specific action plans were developed (both for stage 1 through UNICEF and stage 2 through the Regional Office). This session aims to: provide an update on the progress of the initiative since the Regional Committee met in 2012; follow up with Member States on the implementation of the action plans developed during the technical workshop in June 2013; and clarify the official commitments, requirements and necessary actions to be taken by Member States to make best use of the system. The session will be facilitated by the Regional Office and UNICEF.

2. Health system strengthening – Role and Regulation of the private sector

The importance of the private health sector in most countries of the Region is increasingly being acknowledged by ministries of health. Despite this recognition, it has not been possible to formulate an evidence-based strategy on the role and regulation of the private health sector towards the achievement of public health goals in the Region. A preliminary effort has been undertaken to put together available information on the private health sector in the Region in order to facilitate a dialogue on the subject and eventually lead to the development of a regional strategy. The paper defines the private sector to include all formal service providers working for profit and/or not-for-profit, however, the focus of the efforts have largely been on the for-profit private sector. This work is supplemented by two studies from Egypt and Yemen that specifically review challenges related to regulation of the private health sector. The session will present the findings of these studies, identify gaps in information, highlight challenges and opportunities, and provide key messages to better engage private sector in support of universal health coverage.

3. Health information systems: an update on the development of a list of core indicators

The session will provide an update on the progress in developing a core list of indicators to monitor the health situation, determinants of health, risk factors and health system response in the Region. The list was initially discussed during a meeting of health information system stakeholders in the Region, in May 2013. Following the meeting, the proposed core indicators were reviewed to ensure alignment with programme and country priorities. The list was then shared with the countries for further input and feedback. The session will focus on: the rationale for developing a core list of indicators, as part of the initiative to strengthen health information systems; the categorization and use of the list, and the link with other international frameworks; the challenges and gaps in data sources, analysis and dissemination; and the need to develop national health observatories. The session will raise awareness on this important initiative, and discuss ways of supporting countries in improving data collection, analysis, data quality assessment and dissemination for better use of national data. The full list of both core and optional indicators will be shared, as well as a trend analysis of existing data and interactive maps on a compact disc.

4. WHO global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013-2020

The 66th World Health Assembly, in May 2013, approved the WHO global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020. The plan calls for the development of a limited set of action plan indicators and for the establishment of a global coordination mechanism, under the leadership of WHO, on noncommunicable diseases. The WHO secretariat has developed a draft set of action plan indicators and draft terms of reference for the global coordination mechanism. The objective of the session is to engage Member States of the Region in the ongoing global discussions regarding the global action plan, particularly the action plan indicators and global coordination mechanism, and to seek their input to these two documents.

5. Addressing antimicrobial resistance: priorities in the Region – Guest speaker followed by discussions

Antimicrobial resistance has emerged as an acute global health concern for effective health care delivery. Estimates of the burden or magnitude of the problem associated with antimicrobial resistance in the Region are hampered by the limited availability of reliable data. The session will highlight the growing and emerging risks associated with antimicrobial resistance in the Region and the consequences of inaction. A proposal for a strategic and policy response to combat antimicrobial resistance in the Region will be presented.

6. Regional initiative to end the HIV treatment crisis. Launch of the joint WHO UNAIDS advocacy document “ Accelerating HIV treatment in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean and UNAIDS Middle East and North Africa regions ”

This is a special event organized jointly by WHO and UNAIDS, within the framework of the

regional initiative to end the HIV treatment crisis. The purpose of the event is to promote the initiative and to launch the related report “Accelerating HIV treatment in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean and UNAIDS Middle East and North Africa regions”.

7. Independent Expert Review Group of the Accountability Commission – Launch of second report on maternal and child health

The UN Secretary-General’s Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health, *Every Woman Every Child*, was launched in September, 2010 to accelerate progress towards MDGs 4 (child survival) and 5 (maternal and reproductive health). A critical part of this strategy was the creation of an accountability mechanism to ensure that commitments to women’s and children’s health were being delivered on time and with impact. The UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health reported in 2011. One of the Commission’s 10 recommendations was the creation of an independent Expert Review Group (iERG) to report regularly to the UN Secretary-General on the results and resources related to the Global Strategy, and on progress in implementing the Commission’s recommendations. The iERG issued its second report – *Every woman every child: strengthening equity and dignity through health* – in September 2013. This is the second of the four annual reviews that the iERG will complete up to and including the Millennium Development Goal target date of 2015. This second report summarizes progress towards MDGs 4 and 5, the delivery of commitments made to the UN Secretary-General’s Global Strategy, and the Commission’s recommendations. It also takes two new subjects – country accountability and adolescents – and reviews status in both areas. The iERG puts forth six new recommendations, in addition to those made last year, and reviews how the recommendations made in 2012 have been received and responded to by partners.

8. Meeting for updating on the support of the GAVI Alliance

This session is intended to brief Member States that are eligible for support from the GAVI Alliance on the latest Board decisions and subsequent policies, including performance-based funding and the development of tailored country approaches. It will provide an opportunity to discuss the issues and seek clarifications. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss challenges and constraints that Member States might be facing in implementing GAVI support. It is expected that the session will provide clarity for countries on the GAVI support available to strengthen health systems and routine immunization. The meeting is expected to be chaired by the Minister of Health of Afghanistan, who is the current GAVI Board member representing developing countries, and attended by delegates from GAVI eligible countries in the Region, WHO, GAVI secretariat and partner agencies.

9. Side meeting on Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria

Fifteen countries currently benefit from Global Fund financing for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and health systems in the Region. More than US\$ 1.2 billion of Global Fund investment

is playing a critical role in strengthening and scaling up HIV, tuberculosis and malaria care in these countries. The objectives of the meeting are to: share information, policy updates and key decisions taken at the Global Fund Board meetings held in 2012–2013 and the implications for the Region; provide a briefing on the new funding model and implications for the Region; and discuss the key challenges in implementation for both ministries of health and the Global Fund secretariat. This annual meeting is expected to be attended by ministers, representative of ministries of health, partners and representatives of the Global Fund.

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