

Saving the Lives of Mothers and Children: Rising to the Challenge
Accelerating progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

We, the Ministers of Health and delegates of countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, representatives of United Nations agencies and international, regional and national institutions participating in the high-level meeting on Saving the Lives of Mothers and Children: Rising to the Challenge.

Recognizing that universal access to quality health care is a human right – as enshrined in the 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care; while

Recalling that improving the health of mothers, adolescents and children is key to achievement of development goals, noting that maternal and child health is at the core of multiple international agreements and strategies, including the United Nations Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, Global Commitment to Child Survival – A Promise Renewed, and the recommendations of the UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health;

Acknowledging that still almost one million mothers and children die each year in our countries from mainly preventable causes;

Noting that some countries in our Region face critical challenges in improving the situation of mothers, adolescents and children, particularly humanitarian and social crises, and recognizing the widening inequities in access to basic social services for vulnerable populations and resource distribution between and within countries, and inspired by many examples of success in this Region and globally;

Reaffirm previous commitments aimed at improving the health of our mothers, adolescents and children and the social development of our countries and

Commit to:

Implement the regional initiative Saving the Lives of Mothers and Children: Rising to the Challenge to accelerate progress towards MDGs 4 and 5 in our countries, involving key stakeholders, including parliamentarians, community leaders, civil society organizations, private sector, academia and health professionals:

- Develop, launch and execute a national (or, if appropriate, subnational) multisectoral, costed plan for maternal, adolescent and child health with clear coverage targets for an agreed package of interventions across the continuum of care. These include immunization and other preventive services as well as reproductive health care, with clear outcomes and resource allocations as part of the national or subnational health plan;

- Address social and environmental determinants of maternal, adolescent, newborn and child health, such as poverty, gender, water and sanitation, nutrition and education through strengthened multisectoral initiatives including community involvement;

- Take measurable steps to strengthen our health systems and vital statistics, improving information systems for quality of data, particularly through better civil registration; building a skilled workforce, and improving availability of safe and effective life-saving commodities with a view to removing barriers and bottlenecks and providing equitable access to maternal, adolescent, newborn and child health services;

- Prioritize maternal, adolescent and child health in the design and implementation of humanitarian action and preparedness programmes;

- Establish sustainable financing mechanisms, mobilizing domestic and international resources through traditional and innovative approaches, strengthening regional solidarity and increasing budgets for better health outcomes for all mothers, adolescents and children;

- Improving coordination and accountability between all partners – state and non-state - and promote cooperation between countries within the Region to increase international exchange of experiences on good practices and lessons learned;

- Monitoring progress on the regional initiative Saving the Lives of Mothers and Children: Rising to the Challenge by operationalizing the recommendations outlined in the framework for women's and children's health of the UN Commission on Information and Accountability in support of the UN Global Strategy and related initiatives, and establishing a regional commission on women's, adolescents' and children's health with representation of all

concerned institutions to accelerate and track progress on MDGs 4 and 5.

We pledge to accelerate progress on maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health through national action and international cooperation. We hold ourselves accountable for our collective progress towards this goal. And on behalf of all mothers, adolescents and children in the Region, we recommit to give every woman the best opportunity for safe delivery so that every child has the best possible start in life.

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