

Health diplomacy seminar/forum

1. It is proposed to establish an advisory group on global health diplomacy to support WHO on moving the global health diplomacy agenda forward in the Region.
2. WHO should organize this type of health diplomacy seminar/forum regularly in the Region to help raise awareness and bring stakeholders together. A wide range of decision-makers, including parliamentarians, need to be involved on a regular basis. Future seminars can explore different approaches, take up new issues and include a broader range of participants. For example: it could include a simulation exercise for diplomats to get acquainted with emergencies, a focus on global health law and the importance of regulation, trade and health and a debate on multistakeholder health diplomacy following the WHO proposals for working with non-state actors.

International negotiations

3. WHO must help decision-makers in different sectors to be well informed and prepare well for international negotiations that impact on health. A key role is to provide the health evidence that underpins the negotiations. It can also help countries address the tension between contributing to global health and ensuring the national/regional interest. In this vein the meeting endorsed the recommendations made at the second regional meeting held in preparation for the comprehensive review and assessment of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, to be held at the United Nations General Assembly, 10-11 July 2014.
4. The Region as a whole needs to be more engaged and present in negotiations that are critical for health, as well as in discussions in many different political venues (regional and global). At present this is a priority in particular in relation to the post-2015 discussions taking place at the United Nations. The Region must do more to develop common positions to strengthen their response. Member States should strengthen their presence in the regular meetings held before the World Health Assembly and United Nations assemblies between the Regional Director and permanent representatives. In support of such engagement a network site hosted by WHO will be set up following this seminar.
5. Issues that are critical for the Region need to be taken forward proactively in different international negotiation venues based on common positions. For example, action is needed in relation to the “Health care in danger” initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, noncommunicable diseases, and the movement of people. Action is also encouraged on taking

forward the regional emergency solidarity fund. Member States, particularly permanent missions at the United Nations in New York, need to scale up their engagement in negotiating the outcome document of the comprehensive review and assessment meeting on noncommunicable diseases, 10-11 July 2014.

Capacity-strengthening

6. The Region as a whole needs to significantly strengthen its capacity in health diplomacy. It can do so by pooling financial, technical and human resources available in the Region. One approach in this regard would be to create a capacity-building group that will work with key training and academic institutions in the Region (both schools of diplomacy and health institutions), in order to make use of existing experiences in this field and move the health diplomacy agenda forward more quickly. Ministries of foreign affairs need to ensure that global health diplomacy is included in the training and education of diplomats. Joint education and training between health experts and diplomats should also be encouraged. Online training could also be explored. Providing training for lower-middle income countries can be an important contribution to South-South cooperation.

7. Countries can explore new mechanisms to strengthen the support for global health diplomacy “at home”. This can include strengthening the departments of international relations in ministries of health or establishing a unit for global health diplomacy in the ministry of foreign affairs to make health diplomacy sustainable and advance the issues. National seminars, staff exchanges between ministries, appointment of health attachés and new types of committee should also be included.

Coordination and collaboration

8. Coordination with other agencies and organizations which can support a common health agenda, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), must be made use of and close collaboration sought.

9. More contact should be established between parliamentarians and other decision-makers with regard to health equity, health issues in national security and national legislation, and to get them interested and involved in committees where health is impacted. There is also a need for national parliamentarians to become more familiar with international law and international agreements that affect health, for example the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. One proposal was to consider setting up a health security coordination committee in every country.

Advocacy

10. WHO can help raise awareness among key actors of the interface between global and domestic/local health issues and health and foreign policy. This could be done through a regional conference on global health diplomacy. WHO can draw attention to trends at the regional and global level. The role of the WHO country offices in health diplomacy needs to be strengthened. A regular meeting of health attachés could be explored.

11. The Region's experiences, best practices and achievements in global health diplomacy should be analysed and shared widely also with other lower-middle income countries. A research programme to further develop the field should be considered. A collaborating centre could be designated for this purpose.

12. Efforts must be made to involve the media in global health diplomacy and to be part of the public diplomacy effort. Health diplomacy in the Region can also make more use of the new approaches to communication, especially social media. Digital diplomacy can support this agenda and WHO was asked to explore such approaches.

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