

4 May 2021, Cairo – The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Arab Board of Health Specializations will sign a collaborative agreement in a meeting on 5 May to promote family practice as a means to progress towards universal health coverage in the Region. The virtual meeting will be inaugurated by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, and Dr Omar Al Rawas, Secretary General, Arab Board of Health Specializations, with the participation of regional partners and representatives of United Nations sister agencies, and will take place from 11-00 to 12:00 noon (GMT+2).

The 5-year agreement (April 2021–April 2026) represents an ambitious project that aims to improve health system resilience by building future capacities in public health and community medicine and strengthening postgraduate specialty training system in the Region. WHO and the Arab Board of Health Specializations will develop a joint workplan outlining areas and activities for joint collaboration to advance their shared goals of strengthening health systems and promoting family medicine based on the principles of primary health care.

In addition to promoting family practice and family medicine and building capacity in community medicine specializations; the agreement focuses on building the capacity of the health workforce, including family doctors, to cope with and address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the main expected results of the agreement is to develop institutional capacity by producing a cadre of qualified family doctors at regional and country level.

"WHO welcomes the signing of this agreement that reflects the intent of both organizations to pursue collaborative aims based on our common goals, respective mandates, competencies and comparative advantages. This is in line with our regional vision of health for all by all, and our eagerness to build partnerships to advance universal health coverage based on the principles of primary health care," said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari.

Representatives from the Arab Board of Health Specializations, the World Organization of Family Doctors, UNAIDS, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Refugee Agency and UNICEF, WHO country representatives, along with experts from the WHO Regional Office will participate in the meeting.

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