

Geneva, 23 May 2017 – The Seventieth World Health Assembly (WHA) opened yesterday in Geneva, Switzerland, and will take place until 31 May 2017. The Health Assembly is being attended by nearly 4000 delegates from WHO's 194 Member States and partner organizations and is WHO's highest decision-making body, setting out organizational policy and approving the proposed programme budget. This year, an election will take place for a new WHO Director-General, who will take office for a term of 5 years starting on 1 July 2017.

Technical issues to be discussed at this year's Health Assembly include: approval of the 2018–2019 Programme Budget, health emergency response, poliomyelitis, antimicrobial resistance, pandemic influenza preparedness, access to medicines and vaccines and implementation of the “Global Vaccine Action Plan”, health of refugees and migrants, global vector control response, noncommunicable diseases, and health throughout the life-course.

During a side meeting organized by the WHO Regional Office on 21 May 2017, Dr Mahmoud Fikri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, presented to delegates from the Region a roadmap of WHO's work for the Eastern Mediterranean Region for 2017–2021. It translates the vision of the WHO Regional Director into a set of strategic actions to guide WHO's work with Member States.

Some of the strategic directions and priorities identified in the roadmap include:

- to develop national capacities for scaling up mitigation, prevention, response and early recovery in order to strengthen the capacity of countries' health sectors to prepare for, and respond to, health emergencies;
- to continue ensuring health security through supporting high-risk countries in the areas of surveillance, early detection and response to emerging infectious disease outbreaks;
- to support countries to meet their IHR obligations to build and maintain their IHR capacities;
- to completely interrupt circulation of poliovirus in the Region and to certify eradication of poliomyelitis in the Region by 2021;
- to strengthen Member States' capacity to better prevent, diagnose, and treat communicable diseases;
- to support Member States in implementing the commitments of the United Nations Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases;
- to contribute to improving road safety in the Region;
- to bridge the treatment gap and achieve the overall goal of promoting mental well-being, preventing mental disorders and reducing the mortality, morbidity and disability for persons with

mental disorders;

- to ensure women's, newborn, children's and adolescents' well-being by responding to their health needs and enabling them to survive, thrive and transform;
- to ensure that all people in the Region have equitable access to needed quality health care without discrimination and with dignity, and without undergoing financial hardship.

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