

30 June 2019 – The first meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Forum for Road Safety took place in Muscat, Oman, on 25 June 2019. The meeting brought together Members of Parliament, multisectoral government representatives, nongovernmental organizations and independent experts from 15 countries of the Region.

The aim of the meeting was to review the road safety situation as reflected in the "Global status report on road safety 2018" with a focus on leadership, legislation and data, as well the importance of engaging adolescents and youth. It was also an opportunity to put the Regional Forum in a more practical perspectives through a Regional Road Safety Legislative Initiative aiming at legal and institutional reform at country level. In addition, the meeting endeavoured to look into how best to use data for policy making as countries address road safety. Scaling up the Region's engagement in important upcoming global developments was also discussed, in particular the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety to be held in Sweden in February 2020. The Conference will look back at the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and SDG target 3.6 which ends in 2020 and will look forward on how to shape the global road safety agenda leading up to 2030.

The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Mohammed Bin Saif Al Hosni, Undersecretary of Health Affairs, Ministry of Health, Oman, Dr Sikandar Ali Mandhro, Member of the Senate of Pakistan and Chair of the Regional Forum and Dr Akjemal Magtymova, WHO Representative in Oman.

Dr Al Hosni highlighted Oman's high-level political commitment in addressing the issue of road safety at all levels and the great interest of concerned sectors to contribute to scaling up related national efforts. Dr Akjemal Magtymova, WHO Representative in Oman, delivered the message of Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. In his message Dr Al Mandhari said that holding the meeting in Oman was highly symbolic, in recognition of the country's efforts over many years to put road safety on the global and regional agenda. Road safety continued to be a major public health and development challenge in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, which has the third highest road traffic death rate in the world.

Road traffic injury continues to be a problem for all countries in the Region, regardless of their income level. Young people, at the height of their potential and productivity, are the worst affected. Road crashes are the second leading cause of death among adolescents and young adults aged 15–29 in the Region after collective violence. Road traffic injury is a priority technical area in "WHO's 13th General Programme of Work" and the regional "Vision 2023 -

Health for All by All". She ended by asserting WHO's commitment to provide technical support for Member State to make road safety and Health for All by All a reality. The Chair of the Regional Forum underlined that strong political commitment, support and national ownership at the highest levels is crucial in ensuring that road safety programmes are accorded high priority. In this regard, legislators have an essential role and responsibility to address road safety by establishing appropriate governance mechanisms, with sufficient resources and the power to act.

The launch of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Forum for Road Safety Legislators in September 2018 as a chapter of the Global Network of Road Safety Legislators was a phenomenal achievement and a major stride to provide political leadership, a systematic response, well-orchestrated actions and collaboration of governments and civil society at all levels to achieve results and to advocate for and adopt legislative and policy frameworks to improve road safety.

The Eastern Mediterranean Forum was launched in September 2018 as a chapter of the Global Network of Road Safety Legislators. It represents a platform for legislators in the Region to set priorities and exchange best practices in road injury prevention as well as advocate for and adopt legislation to improve road safety at all levels.

It is hoped that the outcome of this meeting will pave the way for more structured actions to link leadership, by legislators, executives, civil society and young people, to action to improve data-driven laws and policies at country level based on WHO best practice criteria.

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