

Islamabad, 8 May 2018 – The first regional meeting on improving access to assistive technology is taking place from 8 to 10 May 2018 in Islamabad. The meeting is being hosted by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination and WHO.

Chaired by Ms Saira Afzal Tarar, Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, the meeting will be attended by national and international experts from ministries of health and social welfare within the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, as well as international partners.

It is estimated that 15% of the world population or 1 billion people live with some form of disability. In WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region, comprising 22 countries including Pakistan, approximately 3.2% of the population have been reported to be living with disabilities. However, this figure is likely underestimated, according to WHO. The prevalence of disability is growing due to population ageing and the increase in noncommunicable diseases, road traffic injuries and mental health problems.

Assistive devices and technologies are those whose primary purpose is to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence to facilitate participation and to enhance overall well-being. They can also help prevent impairments and secondary health conditions. Examples of assistive devices and technologies include wheelchairs, prostheses, hearing aids, visual aids, and specialized computer software and hardware that increase mobility, hearing, vision, or communication capacities. Currently, it is estimated that in low-income and middle-income countries, only 5–15% of people who require assistive devices and technologies have access to them.

“Pakistan has dedicated major efforts to improve people's access to assistive technology at both global and national level. Pakistan led the preparation of a draft resolution on improving access to assistive technology, which was adopted by WHO Executive Board in January 2018, and will become a global resolution during the upcoming 71st World Health Assembly,” said Dr Mohammad Assai, WHO Representative to Pakistan.

At the national level, Pakistan has taken the initiative of undertaking federal and provincial consultations to develop a framework for improving access to assistive technology in the country. Pakistan is also in the process of undertaking assistive technology needs assessment,

based on four pillars of the Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE) initiative, including service policy, service delivery and training.

The objective of the meeting taking place in Islamabad from 8 to 10 May is to develop a regional framework on improving access to assistive technology in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region. This meeting also aims to update participants on WHO's efforts at the global and regional level to improve access to assistive technology.

Saturday 20th of April 2024 03:41:29 PM