

The fifty-fifth session of the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean is scheduled to take place from 11 to 14 October in Cairo, Egypt. This session will be honoured by the attendance of H.R.H. Princess Lalla Salma of Morocco, Chairwoman of the Lalla Salma Association Against Cancer, and WHO Patron for Prevention and Care of Cancer in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, who will deliver opening remarks during the inaugural session.

The Regional Committee is WHO's governing body in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and comprises the 22 Ministers of Health of the countries of the Region. This year's session will take place in the context of change and reform currently occurring in WHO and its regions and amidst international and regional developments that affects health.

Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director General, will attend the Regional Committee along with Professor Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and Professor Sir Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College, London.

At the meeting, Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, will present his annual report for 2007, highlighting successes achieved and challenges faced in the pursuit of the Organization's objective, which is the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health.

On the agenda of this year's meeting are progress reports on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and tobacco control, highlighting steps that have been taken within the

framework of Bloomberg initiative; HIV/AIDS; and integrated vector management. The WHO secretariat will also report on the status of polio eradication efforts especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the two Member States where polio virus is still endemic.

Among the technical issues to be discussed are climate change and health security; malaria elimination; the gap between research and policy- making; and nursing and midwifery in the Region. A regional strategy for the prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections will also be presented.

Health systems based on primary health care (the theme of the World Health Report for 2008) will also be discussed, along with the social determinants of health following the recent publication of the report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health WHO will present an assessment of its performance during 2006-2007 and the Members of the Committee will also be invited to review the proposed programme budget for WHO for the period 2010-2011.

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