

Statement of I.R. Iran on: Zero-dose children: addressing inequity in routine immunization coverage in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EM/RC72/6)

Agenda item: 5 (a)

Madam/Sir Chairperson,

We appreciate the comprehensive report on addressing zero-dose children in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Vaccination remains one of the most effective and cost-efficient public health interventions. Achieving global and regional immunization targets requires equitable vaccine access for all populations. Despite decades of progress, numerous children remain unvaccinated or under-vaccinated, leaving them vulnerable to deadly disease outbreaks.

This challenge is critically exemplified in Iran, where robust national immunization programs maintaining over 95% coverage, polio-free status, and elimination of measles and rubella are now threatened by cross-border transmission. The influx of populations across our eastern borders has made diseases like measles and polio a serious internal threat, demonstrating that outbreaks respect no borders.

Barriers to immunization vary widely. Conflict-affected and low-income nations face structural health system weaknesses, while other regions contend with vaccine hesitancy and delivery delays. These disparities underscore the necessity of regional solidarity and shared responsibility.

Despite facing sanctions, Iran has consistently prioritized immunization and fully supports regional objectives: halving zero-dose children by 2030, integrating rubella vaccine into all national schedules, and eliminating measles and rubella by 2030 and 2035, respectively. We urgently call upon WHO/EMRO to enhance attention and assistance to our neighboring countries' immunization programs. Iran stands ready to collaborate with regional partners to strengthen health systems, address inequities, and reduce the zero-dose burden, thereby securing our collective public health future.

Thank you.