16 November 2017, Cairo, Egypt The launch of World Antibiotic Awareness Week 2017 in the Region was marked with an event on 13 November held at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean in Cairo, Egypt. The event was attended by the media, representatives of embassies and other United Nations agencies the Ministry of Health and Population in Egypt, academia and WHO staff.

World Antibiotic Awareness Week is an important annual global campaign led by WHO to increase the public's awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance and the measures that even individuals can take to combat this threat to global health. The theme of this year's campaign is "Seek advice from a health care professsional before taking antibiotics" to advocate for the proper use of antibiotics among the general public.

The opening ceremony was followed by a minute's silence to commemorate the late Dr Mahmoud Fikri, who was WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

The opening message of the acting WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean highlighted the importance of combating antimicrobial resistance in the Region, noting that malpractices regarding inappropriate antibiotic consumption were common. Antibiotic resistance is rising to dangerously high levels in all parts of the world putting modern medicine at risk, as well as substantially increasing the costs of health care. Tackling antibiotic resistance is a high priority for WHO and a global action plan on antimicrobial resistance was endorsed by Member States at the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly in 2015. Most recently the Region had shown real commitment to support the response to antimicrobial resistance by endorsing resolution EM/RC64.R.5 on antimicrobial resistance at the Sixty-fourth Session of WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in Pakistan in 2017.

A presentation highlighted the urgent need to take action to address the problem of antimicrobial resistance by showing some alarming data from the Region showing high inappropriate consumption of antibiotics in several countries. The global framework of the WHO strategy on antimicrobial resistance was presented, including communication, surveillance, infection prevention and control in the healthcare settings, optimization antibiotic use, and research development, as well as resource mobilization.

The event was attended by Dr Frederike Mayen, a Senior Livestock Officer with the Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations who gave a presentation about antibiotic use in the animal sector. Animals consume approximately 80% of total annual consumption of antibiotics. Only half of the antibiotics in the animal sector are consumed appropriately. The emergence of antimicrobial resistance in livestock affects human health in multiple ways. The consumption of antimicrobials is expected to rise with the increase in demand for food. A multisectoral, global and coordinated response is needed to respond to this threat.

World Antibiotic Awareness Week campaign materials included posters, infographics, social media postings and the production of radio spots broadcast in not only five languages but in five dialects of Arabic, in addition to a short film about a local family's experience of antimicrobial resistance which highlighted the consequences of infections caused by resistant bacteria on the health and well-being of families. An online application was also developed for use by the public to pledge their commitment to fight antibiotics resistance and become a WHO "hero". The event ended with the launch of a media competition to select the best media coverage of the issue of antibiotic resistance in the Region.

Although the Region has moved forward in its response to antimicrobial resistance and has shown serious commitment to addressing the problem, a tremendous amount of work and effort is still needed.

Friday 12th of July 2024 02:58:26 PM