Cairo, 17 December 2019 – At the brink of a new decade, we find ourselves facing a period of uncertainty that permeates all levels, from the global to the regional to the local. In such times, preparedness in the face of potential health emergencies is more critical than ever, as health security becomes a key priority on the global and regional health agendas.

In this context, the eighth regional stakeholders meeting to review the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 was held at the WHO Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt, from 4 to 6 December 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to accelerate implementation of national action plans for health security (NAPHS) by providing an update on progress in the implementation of IHR-related activities at the country level and addressing the gaps and challenges that have arisen. The meeting was attended by more than 140 participants, including representatives of countries and international partners.

In his opening address, Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, highlighted the importance of NAPHS implementation for building country capacity in health emergencies preparedness and response.

“Ensuring that plans are properly financed and supported with sustainable resources is crucial to ensure their successful implementation, as is establishing transparent mechanisms for countries to strengthen their IHR core capacities to pursue national and global health security” he said.

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