

15th Senior Officials Meeting between WHO and the European Commission

29 June 2018, Geneva, Switzerland

Senior officials from WHO and the European and Commission (EC) met in Geneva, Switzerland, on 29 June 2018 for a meeting focused on strengthening the organizations' collaboration on public health, reviewing ongoing joint initiatives and discussing shared future priorities.

Delegates to the Senior Official Meeting (SOM) from the EC included representatives of the

- Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE),
- Directorate-General for DG Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO),
- Directorate-General for Environment (ENV),
- Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD),
- Directorate-General for humanitarian aid and civil protection (DG ECHO),
- European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and
- Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP).

The WHO delegation was led by Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and included officials from various WHO regional offices and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

The meeting covered a range of topics, including universal health coverage, health emergencies, immunization, anti-microbial resistance, air quality and more. The implementation of the 2015 Vilnius Declaration, which sets out the basis of the ongoing cooperation between DG SANTE and the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe), will be discussed over the coming year.

Key conclusions of the meeting included the following:

- **Strengthening health systems and universal health coverage:** The EC and WHO agreed to strengthen their cooperation, focusing on the elements needed to help achieve universal health coverage, in particular in the area of noncommunicable diseases. The emphasis was on gender, including measuring impact by gender and age-disaggregated indicators, and the very large and growing role of women in the health workforce. Participants also discussed the role of WHO as the natural lead agency to help governments develop local and global health initiatives, such as the Global Fund, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) and the Global Financing Facility (GFF).
- **Health emergencies:** The participants agreed that to achieve sustainable health systems the core capacities under the International Health Regulations (IHR) need to be improved, with a focus on prevention and on achieving results at country level in close cooperation with governments. It was agreed that more discussion is needed on sharing alerts and strengthening coherence and collaboration in the area of IHR and EU health threats acquis. Furthermore, there was agreement that joint missions to countries to conduct needs assessments in health emergency and fragile settings would provide more clarity on the ongoing work in those countries, as well as addressing capacity gaps in the short, medium and long term. A dedicated follow-up meeting will focus on strengthening collaboration in research and development, assurance of quality and sufficient quantities of medical supplies

in emergency situations, and options to make use of the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies.

- **Healthier populations:** The EC and WHO agreed to strengthen collaboration on anti-microbial resistance, including on research and on implementing national action plans, as a shared priority for action. The participants also agreed to intensify cooperation on vaccination, especially on vaccine hesitancy, nutrition and food safety, as well as complementary work on migration with the International Organization for Migration. The EC will provide input to WHO's First Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, while WHO will contribute to the Fitness Check of the EU's Air Quality Directives. WHO was also invited to contribute to the impact assessment of the EU guidelines on water use for irrigation. Finally, it was agreed to support an ambitious multilateral framework to prevent or minimise the adverse effects on health from chemicals and waste.

For more information:

https://ec.europa.eu/health/international_cooperation/international_organisations_en

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/partners/the-european-union-and-its-institutions>