

**Regional Workshop on Networking of Laboratories for
Emerging Infectious Diseases, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 28-31 July 2009**

Conclusions and Recommendations

The participants of the Regional Workshop on Networking of Laboratories for Emerging Infectious Diseases endorsed the Asia Pacific Strategy for Strengthening Health laboratories and agreed to adapt it to suit their respective national requirements and utilize it for advocating with policy makers and formulation of national laboratory plan/programme emphasizing a national framework of laboratories that is well-regulated and funded, ensures adequate capacity to meet the national needs, promotes quality results, assures safety of laboratory workers, environment and material, as well as stimulates rational use of laboratory services.

The participants reviewed the status of health laboratories and observed that to enhance the regional laboratory capacity for supporting an effective response to emerging infectious diseases, it is mandatory to forge regional networks of laboratories for priority diseases viz. plague, anthrax, leptospirosis, acute diarrhoeal diseases (including cholera), antimicrobial resistance; arboviruses (dengue and chikungunya), acute encephalitis syndrome, Nipah virus, and acute respiratory infections (including influenza). The participants identified the coordinating laboratories for these regional networks, drafted their terms of reference and a mechanism for operationalization of these networks. They made following recommendations to the Member countries and the WHO:

Member countries should

1. Formulate and implement a national laboratory plan that incorporates the key elements as enunciated in the Asia Pacific Strategy for Strengthening of Health Laboratories including designation of a national focal point for health laboratories
2. Harness the laboratory expertise available within the countries to forge national networks of laboratories for priority emerging diseases
3. Designate national reference laboratories for priority emerging diseases to be members of the respective disease specific networks
4. Provide administrative approval, as per the current law and practices of the countries, to the national reference laboratories that are members of the regional networks for exchange of information and biological material
5. Promote greater collaboration between health laboratories and the users of its services in curative as well as public health sectors

WHO should

1. Advocate with the national authorities adoption of the Asia Pacific Strategy for Strengthening of Health Laboratories and provide technical assistance in development of national laboratory framework and its implementation
2. Support efficient functioning of the laboratory networks for priority emerging infectious diseases
3. Organize a meeting of the coordinating laboratories of the regional networks to obtain their concurrence and identify the areas which may need support to operate the network
4. Draft a material transfer agreement that can be utilized by the countries for exchange of biological material between members of the laboratory network