



SEAR/PR 1533

South-East Asian countries resolve to give higher priority to key health issues

Jaipur, 9 September 2011: Ministers of health and senior health officials from 11 South-East Asian countries today resolved to give higher priority to key health issues like HIV-AIDS, routine immunization and nutrition in the Region. Recognizing that countries need to urgently step up their efforts to meet health-related MDGs by 2015, delegates attending the Sixty-fourth session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia also agreed on new strategic directions and passed resolutions on strengthening the community-based health workforce and national essential drug policy.

While 500 000 children die each year from vaccine-preventable diseases in WHO's South-East Asia Region, about 10 million children are not covered by routine immunization. The delegates adopted a resolution to make 2012 the year of intensification of routine immunization in the Region to increase and sustain immunization coverage. WHO will work with Member States to strengthen national capacities to intensify routine immunization; to support organizing an annual immunization week in April and to ensure routine immunization remains a national priority

Seventy per cent of the world's malnourished children reside in the Member States of WHO's South-East Asia Region. Many also suffer from several micronutrient deficiencies like iron and iodine.

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Countries also adopted the Regional Nutrition Strategy to address malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. They recognized the presence of both macro-and micronutrient under-nutrition among women and children in particular, as well as the rapid increase of overweight/obesity in children and possible increasing diet-related chronic diseases in adults. The Regional Committee urged Member States to make nutrition an integral part of a multisectoral national development agenda including reinforcement of existing policies and interventions and to develop specific advocacy tools to raise awareness of policy makers about the urgent need to intensify multisectoral actions. Member States are also asked to support existing interventions for improved nutrition by implementing fully the global strategy for infant and young child feeding and to build capacity of hospitals and health workers to improve the care of the severely malnourished.

The SEA Region has the second highest burden of HIV in the world after sub-Saharan Africa with an estimated 3.5 million people infected with HIV. The Regional Committee recognized that HIV prevention must continue as a core focus area in the Region.

The Regional Committee urged Member States to incorporate WHO policies, strategies and tools into their national programmes, including HIV prevention measures, early diagnosis, treatment and care. They asked countries to integrate HIV interventions into revitalized primary health care services and to strengthen links between HIV, tuberculosis, sexual and reproductive health and maternal, newborn and child health and other programmes to ensure sustainability of HIV activities.

WHO was asked to provide technical support to Member states in implementing the HIV strategy and to facilitate resource mobilization for this.

For more information please contact:

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