



REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Provisional Agenda item 11.1

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### **Management and Governance matters: Management performance and Reform in the SEA Region**

This Agenda item seeks to brief Member States on the initiatives undertaken by the Organization to become more effective and accountable, and in particular, the tangible results achieved by the South-East Asia (SEA) Region in strengthening Management and Programmatic performance since 2014.

Various initiatives were successfully implemented in the Programmatic, Governance and Managerial categories that greatly improved the overall compliance, accountability and transparency levels in the SEA Region, and strengthened the capacity of the WHO country offices to work with implementing partners to deliver on the country and global public health priorities. This paper outlines the work of the SEA Region in alignment with the Transformation Agenda, and the organizational shifts set out in the Thirteenth General Programme of Work 2019–2023 (GPW13).

The strong leadership and commitment of the WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, particularly expressed through the clear directives of the eight Regional Flagships, has allowed the Region to enhance its policies and technical support to Member States and strengthened focus on financing and staffing needs to match priorities and requirements. Accordingly, the SEA Region is very well positioned to contribute to GPW13 and the Director-General's Transformation Agenda.

The attached Working Paper was presented to the High-Level Preparatory (HLP) Meeting for noting. The HLP reviewed the paper and made the following recommendations for consideration by the Seventy-first Session of the Regional Committee:

#### **Action by WHO**

- Ensure review by the Secretariat the continued sustainable growth in the achievement of the Regional Flagship targets, taking forward the directions through the GPW13.

The Working Paper and the HLP recommendations are submitted to the Seventy-first Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia for its consideration.



## Background

### Global perspective:

1. Since 2014, the introduction of Programmatic, Governance and Managerial reform initiatives have brought about significant progress towards meeting the objectives of making WHO a more effective, efficient, accountable and transparent Organization that leverages its relative strengths and comparative advantages to improve health outcomes.
2. Under the Programmatic initiative, explicit priority-setting and a strengthened technical delivery model were introduced by the Organization. The key outcomes include: (i) needs-driven priority-setting, redefinition of results and resource allocation aligned to the delivery of results; (ii) improvements in the delivery model at the three levels of the Organization to efficiently support Member States; (iii) predictable, adequate and aligned financing to support strategic focus; and (iv) transparent reporting of results and use of resources. These fundamentals were introduced and implemented in the Twelfth General Programme of Work that was endorsed by the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly in 2013.
3. The focus on Governance improvements concentrated on (i) internal working methods of WHO's Governing Bodies; (ii) external engagement with stakeholders; and (iii) WHO's role in global health governance.
4. With regard to Managerial initiatives, the Secretariat committed to strengthening (i) accountability and transparency; (ii) information management; and (iii) evaluation across the three levels of the Organization.
5. Finally, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 reinforced the need for additional changes in WHO's operating model under health emergencies.
6. With the election of Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus as Director-General in 2017, and thereafter the Organizational shifts set out in the Thirteenth General Programme of Work 2019–2023 (GPW13) to achieve the ambitious “triple billion” goals, WHO has established a Transformation Plan drawn from various consultations between WHO headquarters, regional offices as well as country offices to outline “how” the Organization will shift its operating model, as well as its processes and ways of working together to realize these goals.

### Regional perspective

7. The strong leadership and commitment of the Regional Director for South-East Asia (SEA) has enabled the Region to strengthen its policies for and extent of technical support to Member States, improve alignment of financing and staffing needs to match priorities and requirements, and promote clear alignment with the Transformation Agenda of the Director-General.
8. The SEA Region has been taking focused measures to continuously improve support to its Member States, strengthen partnerships, lead the global public health agenda, and make WHO a more effective, efficient, transparent and accountable Organization. The Region has made tangible progress in the areas of programmatic compliance, governance initiatives, transparency and accountability as well as in health emergencies, all in full alignment with the guidelines and policies of WHO headquarters.
  - (i) Programmatic compliance: The key indicators of the Regional Director's eight Flagship Programmes are in complete alignment with GPW13 as well as the Transformation Agenda.

- (ii) Strengthened Governance initiatives: Best practices have been adopted from other regions. The Region has taken the lead with certain initiatives, which have streamlined the work of the Regional Committee as well as various other high-level meetings.
- (iii) Transparency and accountability: The Region has recorded significant progress in accountability, risk management and transparency.
- (iv) Robust Emergency preparedness: The Regional Director's Flagship Programme on Emergencies is testament to the importance accorded to the Emergencies Programme in the Region.

9. In 2014, in full consultation with Member States, the Regional Director launched Seven Regional Flagship Priorities, and an Eighth was added in 2017 with the Delhi Call for Action to End TB in the WHO South-East Asia Region by 2030. Member States are central to the Region's way of working, with over 75% of funding made available to the country offices.

10. As part of the Flagship initiative, Member States of the Region have identified 10 priorities to take forward through the country cooperation strategies (CCSs), and approximately 80% of the funds at the country level are spent on these priorities in order to maximize the impact and outcomes of WHO's collaboration.

11. The efficiency measures and best practices introduced in the enabling functions, as well as in managerial and administrative areas, have helped the Region strengthen accountability through performance-based results management, the outcome of which can be seen through the favourable internal and external audit reports over the past years.

12. The Working Paper summarizes the progress made in the past two bienniums, interwoven with the achievements under the Regional Director's Flagships Programme, and the Region's commendable work in emergencies, especially during the Nepal earthquake of 2015 and, more recently, the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.

## **Updates from the SEA Region on achievements**

### **A. Programmatic compliance**

13. GPW13, adopted by the Seventy-first World Health Assembly, aims for the development of a priority-based and results-driven Programme Budget with sharpened focus on country needs and geared towards achieving impacts at the country level.

14. The key indicators of the Regional Director's Flagships Programme are in complete alignment with GPW13's impact framework targets, as well as the Director-General's Transformation Agenda.

15. GPW13 sets out a results and accountability framework to monitor and report on Organizational performance in achieving the goals and outcomes set out in the document. The SEA Region, as with other WHO regions, will be adopting this framework for its Programme Budget as well as monitoring and assessment of Operational Plans 2020–2021 and 2022–2023. This process will build on the transparency and accountability processes and practices already in place in the Region following the results-based management approach.

16. A web-based resource mobilization system that automates clearance of donor agreements, allows for follow up on donor reporting, and accurately projects new resource streams has been developed and implemented.

## **B. Strengthened Governance initiatives**

17. In May 2018, the 143rd Session of the Executive Board deliberated on various Governance initiatives to improve the efficiency of the Governing Bodies and their focus on strategic issues. Various options and proposals were presented to strengthen the strategic role of the Executive Board and improve the management of the Agenda items. This has been an ongoing discussion over the past several years at Governing Body sessions at headquarters.

18. Adopting best practices from other regions and taking the lead with certain initiatives, the SEA Region has taken significant steps during the past two bienniums to streamline the working of its Regional Committee as well as other high-level meetings. The key highlights are as follows:

- Reduction in the number of agenda items, pre-session documents and resolutions at Governing Body meetings and the introduction of side events/technical briefings at the Regional Committee sessions;
- Introduction of electronic dissemination of governance documents during the Regional Committee and other high-level meetings, contributing to a significant reduction in the carbon footprint and greener Governing Bodies;
- The complete “sunset” and “conditional sunset” of long-outstanding Regional Committee resolutions;
- Successful institution of the practice of a “Regional One Voice (ROV)”, wherein Member States come together to speak as one in global forums to highlight issues of importance to the Region as a whole.

## **C. Managerial initiatives: Transparency and accountability**

19. Among the many initiatives undertaken, the Region was able to record significant progress in accountability, risk management and transparency. Some of the achievements include the following:

- Expansion of the annual representation letter to include, in addition to the Regional Director, WHO Representatives and Department Directors to certify compliance with and accuracy of financial records. This harmonized approach enabled representation letters to feed into an Organization-wide Statement of Internal Control constituting an integral part of the SEA Region’s accountability;
- Development and implementation of administrative and programme management review missions aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of country office operations, as well as identification of best practices;
- Restructuring exercises in six country offices to ensure that the right skills and resources are present to deliver the agreed priorities at the country level. The remaining five country offices will complete this exercise in 2018;
- Identification of the risks associated with the achievement of the Organizational mandate through implementation of risk registers and Internal Control Framework checklists in all SEA Region Budget Centres;
- Establishment of a Regional Compliance Network at the Regional Office with active participation and involvement of all country offices and departments. The overall aim is to improve compliance through knowledge-sharing of best practices, policy development and improvements in processes and procedures;

- A web-based portal has been designed and implemented to simplify and streamline the work of WHO in the SEA Region in order to achieve greater cost and work efficiencies. This portal has two complementary purposes – clear information on the business processes and consolidation of automated processes into one simple platform. The modules intend to bring in transparency, better compliance and a clearer audit trail. This would result in an inherent efficiency with the reduced movement of paper files and reduce the carbon footprint as well as duplication of work;
- To achieve operational efficiencies in the supply chain landscape, core category longer-term agreements (LTAs) have been introduced as well as scalable stockpiling and warehouse logistics operations. These will support the Region’s stock management and distribution, especially for active use by the Emergencies Programme;
- The Region’s commitment to promoting a culture of transparency, accountability and risk management, including independent evaluation, was reflected by the prioritization of the budget for this Programme Area in the Programme Budget for 2018–2019. This is despite an overall decrease in the category “Corporate services and enabling functions”;
- Enhanced monitoring and sustained compliance led to significant improvements in key performance indicators under “enabling” functions, such as:
  - (i) overdue donor reports – close monitoring of overdue donor reports has facilitated timely submission of interim and final donors’ reports, resulting in reduction of outstanding receivables,
  - (ii) direct financial cooperation (DFCs) – as part of continued efforts to target timely reporting, and with the support and cooperation of the respective ministries of health, the Region reported “zero” overdue reports as on 31 December 2017. Timely submission of DFC reports has further strengthened and contributed to effective delivery of results through greater compliance, accountability and stewardship of resources,
  - (iii) Imprest operations – electronic monthly imprest returns have been developed and implemented, improving turnaround time and saving on pouch costs,
  - (iv) Audit recommendations – substantial improvements have been made on reducing the number of outstanding audit recommendations. At the time of writing the report in August 2018, there were only four pending recommendations relating to the currently concluded audits and no long-outstanding recommendations.

20. The Region has accorded high importance to Evaluation: The WHO South-East Asia Regional Framework for Strengthening Evaluation for Learning and Development as well as the SEA Region Evaluation Workplan for 2018–2019 were presented and deliberated on at the Seventieth session of the Regional Committee in September 2017. In an effort to mainstream and strengthen the culture of evaluation, the SEA Region has aligned its regional independent evaluation policy to the WHO Evaluation Policy and completed two independent evaluations. Regional Committee Agenda 7.4 provides further updates on Evaluation in the Region.

#### **D. Robust Emergency preparedness**

21. The process of rolling out the WHO Health Emergencies Programme in the SEA Region is built on the Regional Office’s emergency management experience in past natural disasters. The importance of the Emergencies Programme in the Region has been further emphasized through its

inclusion as a Flagship Programme of the Regional Director, i.e. scaling up development of emergency risk management in countries. This Regional Flagship also links to the overarching “triple billion” goal, related to Health Emergencies, which has been set out in GPW13 (“one billion more people better protected from health emergencies”).

22. The South-East Asia Regional Health Emergency Fund (SEARHEF) has been established and operational since 2008. With the total allocation of US\$ 1 million per biennium from the WHO Corporate Fund and initial disbursement of US\$ 175 000 (within 24 hours) following a request by Member States, SEARHEF has provided support to nine Member States in the Region during 34 instances of declared emergencies since its inception. The scope and mandate of SEARHEF has been expanded to include a preparedness stream.

23. The Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee (IOAC), during its visit in January 2018, expressed its appreciation of the progress made in the implementation of the Emergencies Programme in the Region, including the response efforts during the Rohingya crisis, and particularly its successful vaccination campaign.

## **The way forward**

24. In alignment with the impact- and outcome-focused approach indicated by GPW13, the Region will strive to further strengthen its operations around the eight Flagships and thereby contribute effectively towards the achievement of the three strategic priorities in GPW13.

25. The various efficiency gains and harmonized processes initiated in the Region intend to provide strong support to the technical programmes across the eleven Member States to achieve the “triple billion” target.

26. The Committee is invited to note the report.