



WHO Regional Committee
for South-East Asia

Report of the Special Session

28 March 2019
through videoconferencing



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR

**World Health
Organization**
South-East Asia

WHO Regional Committee
for South-East Asia

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WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia – Report of the Special Session

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Introduction

1. A Special Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia was held by videoconferencing on 28 March 2019. It was attended by representatives of 10 Member States of the Region.
2. The Regional Director welcomed all delegations attending this first Special Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia held by videoconferencing.
3. In accordance with Rule 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, His Excellency Mr Upendra Yadav, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and Population, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, and Co-Chairperson of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia opened the Special Session of the Regional Committee in the absence of the Chairperson of the Regional Committee, H.E. Mr J.P. Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
4. H.E. Mr Yadav explained that, following a suggestion from the floor during the Seventy-first session of the Regional Committee in September 2018 to look into ways to hold the Special Session envisaged in Decision SEA/RC71(3) without need for travel in order to reduce carbon footprint, cost and time required by delegates, the Secretariat had explored options. He further explained that, upon the advice from the Secretariat that the rules of procedure did not preclude the holding of a session of the Regional Committee through videoconferencing, the Regional Director convened the Special Session through videoconferencing, following consultation with the Chairperson.



Business session

Opening of the Session (*Agenda item 1*)

5. In the absence of the Chairperson of the Seventy-first session of the Regional Committee, H.E. Mr Upendra Yadav, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and Population, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, opened the Special Session.
6. H.E. Mr Yadav thanked the distinguished delegates and informed them that the Special Session was convened to discuss a single substantive item, namely the place of next regular session of the Regional Committee, following Decision SEA/RC71(3), which the Committee had taken at its Seventy-first session in September 2018 in New Delhi.
7. Advising the Member States on the procedural framework concerning the Special Session, the honourable minister reminded all about the proposal to suspend Rule 3 of the Rules of Procedure, insofar as this rule was understood to require submission of credentials in the original, and the proposal to suspend the Rules of Procedure that enable voting by secret ballot. He informed all that the purpose of these proposals was to facilitate the holding of this Special Session in a decentralized manner through videoconferencing, noting that any suspension would be temporary and not constitute a prejudice for future sessions. The Committee agreed to suspend the rules as proposed.
8. It was also observed by the Co-Chairperson that since the Rules of Procedure stipulated that the sessions of the Committee shall be held in public unless the Committee decided otherwise, arrangements had been made to stream the session live on the website of the Regional Office for South-East Asia. Furthermore, a sound recording of the special session would be made in accordance with Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure.

Credentials of Representatives (*Agenda item 2*)

9. The Committee was informed that in line with Rules 3 and 3bis of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee, the Credentials of the Representatives had been examined by the Chairperson and that the validity of the credentials of all

Representatives of all attending Member States, including of all alternates and advisers, had been found to be in order.



10. Following the proposal by the Co-Chairperson, the Regional Committee accepted the credentials of all Member States of the Region attending the Special Session as valid.

Election of Officebearers (*Agenda item 3*)

11. Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the Regional Committee provides that the Committee shall elect its officers, a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman, from among the representatives each year at its first session held during that year. The officers shall hold office until their successors are elected. It was clarified during the election of Officebearers that this provision has been understood as requiring an election of Officebearers at the **first regular** session held during the year.

Adoption of the Agenda (*Agenda item 4, SEA/RCSS1/1*)

12. In accordance with Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure for the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia, the Chair of the Special Session introduced the Agenda and invited comments from the distinguished delegates. The Agenda was adopted unanimously. *[For the Agenda please see Annex 1]*
13. Under the leadership of its Co-Chairperson, the Committee then considered the place of its next regular session in September 2019.

Time and place of future sessions of the Regional Committee

(Agenda item 5, SEA/RCSS1/2 Rev.1)

14. The Chair invited Mr Steven Solomon, Principal Legal Officer, WHO headquarters, Geneva, to introduce the item. The Principal Legal Officer drew the attention of delegates to the chain of events that constituted the background to this Special Session. Following the kind invitation of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Regional Committee had decided to hold its Seventy-second Session in Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in September 2019 vide RC Decision SEA/RC71(3), subject to clearance from the relevant United Nations Sanctions Committee. The Regional Committee had further decided that, in the absence of such clearance, the Regional Committee would hold a Special Session in March 2019, to consider the matter.
15. The Principal Legal Officer outlined the steps taken from September 2018 to March 2019 to give effect to the Regional Committee's decision. He informed all that the United Nations Security Council Committee established pursuant to Resolution 1718 (2006), which was the relevant United Nations Sanctions Committee, had communicated that it did not approve the requested exemptions and the steps which had, as a consequence, been undertaken to convene the Special Session.
16. During the plenary discussions, the distinguished delegates thanked the Co-Chair for chairing the Special Session, the Regional Director for organizing the Special Session and the Secretariat for arranging for consultations with the United Nations Security Council Committee established pursuant to Resolution 1718 (2006) and Member States.
17. The Member States reaffirmed their commitment to participate actively in every Regional Committee Session, irrespective of the venue.
18. The Co-Chair proposed that the Regional Office host the Seventy-second Session of the Regional Committee in the week of 2–6 September 2019 and make preparations from now till September to organize the event.
19. The proposal was seconded by the distinguished delegate from Bhutan.
20. Following this the distinguished delegate from Thailand made an intervention on the suggested text of the Decision of the Special Session of the Regional Committee. Interventions were made and a consensus Decision was proposed and eventually adopted by the Committee (Decision SEA/RCSS1(1), placed in Chapter 3 of this report).

Adoption of the report and Decision of the Special Session of the Regional Committee (Agenda item 6)

21. The draft report of the Regional Committee Special Session was taken up for consideration and adoption. As suggested by the Chairperson, the operative paragraphs of the report were considered by the distinguished delegates. Amendments were proposed to certain sections, and these were adopted by consensus.
22. Apart from Decision SEA/RCSS1(1), the Regional Committee also considered and adopted a resolution of thanks (Resolution SEA/RCSS1/R1) which is equally placed in Chapter 3 of this report.

Closing session (Agenda item 7)

23. The distinguished delegates expressed their appreciation of the Regional Director and the secretariat for the smooth conduct of what they unanimously referred to as a “very special” Special Session. It was observed that this was the first Governing Body session conducted through videoconferencing in the history of the World Health Organization over the last 70 years. The tangible savings in costs and carbon footprint were also noted and appreciated.



- Delegates expressed their unqualified appreciation of the Regional Director, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, for her leadership in organizing the session. They also had a word of appreciation for the WHO headquarters Principal Legal Officer for his coordination with UN agencies in the run-up to the Special Session.
24. The distinguished delegates also observed that the session was a “very interactive and high-energy” one. A high degree of technological finesse was in evidence that made the conduct of the meeting efficient, seamless and flawless. The Secretariat from the WHO Regional Office was praised for its efficiency.
 25. Delegates also reiterated that the consensus decisions reflected the state of continuous cooperation and immense solidarity between Member States of the Region. A special word of thanks was reserved for the Chair for efficiently conducting a fruitful session that saw ingenious contributions from delegations.

26. The Regional Director, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, thanked delegates for their time and efforts, and for their productive contributions. She thanked the Chair for successfully chairing the first virtual Governing Body session ever in WHO. She also thanked the Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, for his guidance and leadership. She observed that the inputs from the delegates were of critical value, and that the Secretariat's efforts led to a flawlessly conducted session that harnessed the best technological infrastructure and capacity.
27. The Chair, H.E. Mr Upendra Yadav, reiterated the collective appreciation of the delegates and expressed his grateful thanks to the Regional Director for the successful conduct of the Special Session. He then closed the first-ever Special Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia.

Resolution and Decision

Resolution

SEA/RCSS1/R1 Resolution of Thanks

The Regional Committee

Having brought its Special Session to a successful conclusion,

1. THANKS His Excellency, Mr Jagat Prakash Nadda, honourable Minister of Health and Family Welfare, India, for his guidance and support towards convening this Special Session;
2. THANKS His Excellency, Mr Upendra Yadav, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and Population, Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, for Chairing this Special Session and guiding the deliberations to ensure its success;
3. THANKS the WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, for his leadership and guidance for the Regional Committee for South-East Asia; and
4. CONGRATULATES the Regional Director and her staff for their efforts towards the successful and smooth conduct of the Special Session.

Decision

SEA/RCSS1(1) Place of the Seventy-second Session of the Regional Committee

The Regional Committee, at its Special Session on 28 March 2019, having considered the non-approval of the required clearances by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Resolution 1718 (2006) to host its Seventy-second Session in Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea:

REAFFIRMED its regional solidarity to the prior commitment to hold the Seventy-second Session of the Regional Committee in Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as decided by SEA/RC71 (3), subject to clearance by the relevant Sanctions Committee; and

DECIDED that the Seventy-second Session of the Regional Committee will be hosted by the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia during the week of 2–6 September 2019.

Annex 1

Agenda

1. Opening of the Session
2. Credentials of Representatives
3. Election of Officebearers
4. Adoption of the Agenda SEA/RC7SS1/1
5. Adoption of the Agenda item on 'Time and place of future sessions of the Regional Committee' SEA/RCSS1/2 Rev.1
6. Adoption of the report and Decision of the Special Session of the Regional Committee SEA/RCSS1/3
7. Closing session

Annex 2

List of participants

Bangladesh

Representative

Professor Dr Abul Kalam Azad
Director-General of Health Services
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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Alternate

Professor Dr Nasima Sultana
Additional Director-General (Admin.)
Directorate-General of Health Services
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dr Iqbal Kabir
Associate Professor
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(NIPSOM)
Bangladesh

Bhutan

Representative

H.E. Ms Dechen Wangmo
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
Royal Government of Bhutan

Alternate

Dr Ugen Dopu
Secretary
Ministry of Health
Royal Government of Bhutan

Dr Karma Lhazeen
Director
Ministry of Health
Royal Government of Bhutan

Adviser

Mr Tashi Penjor
Chief Planning Officer
Ministry of Health
Royal Government of Bhutan

Mr Tshering Dhendup
Dy Chief Programme Officer
Ministry of Health
Royal Government of Bhutan

India*Representative*

Mr Lav Agarwal
Joint Secretary (International Health)
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
Government of India

Indonesia*Representative*

Mr Acep Somantri
Director
Bureau of International Cooperation
Ministry of Health
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Alternate

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Head of Section of Multilateral Cooperation
Bureau of International Cooperation
Ministry of Health
Republic of Indonesia

Ms Gita L. Murti
Diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Indonesia

Ms Isnaniyah Rizky
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Ministry of Health
Republic of Indonesia

Maldives*Representative*

H.E. Mr Abdulla Ameen
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Ministry of Health
Republic of Maldives

Alternate

Ms Khadeeja Abdulla
Permanent Secretary
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Republic of Maldives

Ms Maimoona Aboobakuru
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Health Protection Agency
Ministry of Health
Republic of Maldives

Ms Aishath Samiya
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Policy Planning and International Health
Ministry of Health
Republic of Maldives

Mr Mohamed Fazeen
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Ministry of Health
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Mr Ali Ahmed Manik
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Nepal

Representative

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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health and Population
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Alternate

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Secretary
Ministry of Health and Population
Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

Mr Chandra Kumar Ghimire
Secretary
Ministry of Health and Population
Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

Sri Lanka

Representative

Dr Anil Jaisinghe
Director-General of Health Services
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Thailand

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Alternate

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Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Annex 3

List of official documents

SEA/RCSS1/1	Adoption of the Agenda
SEA/RCSS1/2 Rev.1	Adoption of the Agenda item on Time and place of future sessions of the Regional Committee
SEA/RCSS1/3	Adoption of the report and decisions of Special session of the Regional Committee



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