

Plan of Action on Health Cooperation in ECO Region

2023-2024

(To be submitted to the 5th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Health in Geneva, in 24 May 2023)

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5. Introduction

The first meeting of the ECO Health Ministers, held on 4-5 February 2010 in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, underlined the importance and the necessity of a Plan of Action to promote health cooperation among Member States through harmonized policies. The third High level Experts Group Meeting, held 21-22 January 2015 in Tehran, deliberated on a draft outline for Plan of Action as proposed by the host country (the Islamic Republic of Iran) and agreed to submit it to the meeting of ECO Health Ministers. The 2nd ECO Health Ministerial Meeting on 19 May 2015 on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva discussed the proposed text and adopted the Outline for ECO Plan of Action on Health Cooperation.

On the basis of the ministerial outline, Secretariat in cooperation with the current Chairman, the Islamic Republic of Iran (health authorities) developed the text of the draft plan of action. The text was then circulated among the Member States for their consideration and feedbacks.

The final draft of the plan of action was later submitted to the ECO Ministerial Meeting on Heath, convened on 24 May 2016 in Geneva, on the sidelines of the 69th session of the World Health Assembly. The Ministerial Meeting adopted the following Plan of Action on Health Cooperation in the ECO Region to be effective from 2016 to 2025.

1. Objectives

The general objective of the Plan of Action is to pursue activities that would enhance joint cooperation among ECO Member States, in accordance with Treaty of Izmir, and in line with their bilateral and international agreements as well as national legislations. The Plan of Action is developed, in letter and spirit, in a way to reflect the emerging regional and global health-related circumstances; the global health agenda as illustrated in the SDGs, particularly Goal 3 and its targets; 2030 global development agenda; WHO agenda; and above all, the immediate needs and requirements of ECO Member States. The specific objectives to be followed in the Plan of Action are guided by major ECO health indicators, such as life expectancy, maternal mortality rate (MMR) and infant mortality rate (IMR), as well as socio-economic status of the Member States, which are considerably diverse. Considering the core mission of ECO as an economic development organization, and bearing in mind the importance of health for sustainable economic development, the Plan of Action should concentrate on different health dimensions.

The specific objectives of the Plan of Action are as follows:

1. Translating SDGs into action as the Cornerstone of Sustainable Health Development,
2. Strengthening health system in the ECO Member States to achieve UHC,
3. Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the ECO Member States,
4. Communicable Diseases of Common Concerns i.e. TB, Malaria, HIV/AIDS, CCHF, Poli, MERS Disease,
5. Health related aspects **of disasters and emergency**, preparedness, monitoring and surveillance.
6. Actions to be taken

For realization of the objectives of this Plan of Action, the Member States agreed to give effect to the following actions. The actions, defined in line with nine specific objectives enumerated above, will be implemented in accordance with the arrangements described in the tables as well as in section 4 below. Each action will be supported by implementation modality indicating the envisaged activities, mode of activities, the lead country/body, and the timeframe. The review and monitoring process of each action will be worked out in collaboration between Lead Country, Secretariat and Advisory Group as explained in section 4 below.

1. Implementation, Follow-up and Review Mechanism
   1. In three months following the adoption of this Plan of Action, the ECO Secretariat will convene a high level working group (HLWG) to discuss implementation of the Plan of Action. The Meeting shall, among others, develop timetable for the activities envisaged under each Action, giving precedence to those of priority nature for the Region. The Meeting will also assign the lead country for each Action.
   2. An advisory group of 4 relevant experts/officials will be established by the High Level Working Group referred to above from among the candidates nominated by the interested Member States. The terms of reference of the Advisory Group will be defined by the HLWG. This Advisory Group will, in collaboration with lead countries and the Secretariat, develop indicators/benchmarks for the periodic evaluation of the implementation of the Plan of Action in general and each Action in particular. The inputs from relevant partners, particularly WHO may be sought in this regard.
   3. There should be annual review reports on the status of the implementation of the Plan of Action. The review reports, to be prepared jointly by the Advisory Group and the Secretariat, should be submitted for consideration to the annual meetings of the ECO Regional Planning Council (RPC).
   4. There should be a mid-term review for the Plan of Action, preferably done by the ECO Ministerial meeting in the fifth year of the implementation of the Plan of Action. The mid-term review is meant to allow necessary adjustments in the Plan of Action in the light of emerging regional and global situations, based on the recommendations made by the Advisory Group and Secretariat.
   5. Secretariat will facilitate work of the advisory group, including its physical and virtual meetings. The CPR will be requested to allocate necessary financial resources from the FGPF and SSF.

Priority 1. **Translating SDGs into action as the Cornerstone of Sustainable Health Development**

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| No. | **Project/Activity/Intervention** | **Modes of Activity** | **Suggested Lead**  **Country** | **Time Table** | **Priority/ Notes** |
| 1 | Strengthening Leadership and Accountability for Health to achieve SDGs. | 1. Training courses for Leadership Education through collaboration with Member States to better understand SDGs health indicators and forward to achieve SDGs 2. Regional workshop on Health Diplomacy | Iran  Turkiye, Iran | Q4/2023 |  |
| 2 | South- south collaboration within ECO member state to Ensure Achieving SDGs by 2030 | 1. Facilitating the exchange of experience through establishment of a regional network / website accessible for member states | Pakistan  Iran | Q1/2024 |  |
| 3 | Strengthening External partnership and increasing sustainable resources (financial/ human) for implementation of the Action Plan | 1. Negotiation with health-related UN Agencies and International Organizations to support the ECO Action Plan on Health. 2. Preparing proposal / concept note for priorities /activities 3. Signing MoU between ECO and WHO / other health-related agencies | ECO Secretariat |  |  |

Priority 2. **Strengthening health system in the ECO Member States to achieve UHC**

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| **No.** | **Project/Activity/Intervention** | **Modes of Activity** | **Suggested Lead**  **Country** | **Time Table** | **Priority/ Notes** |
| 1 | Capacity building and exchange experience Facilitating collaboration in **UHC** research (WHOCC) | 1. Experience sharing on best practice among ECO MSs through Establishment of platform for networking. 2. Training course for increasing joint Research & Publication in collaboration with best research centers specially WHO Collaborating Centers | Turkey  Kazakhstan | TBD |  |
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| 2 | Strengthening Resilient Health System | 1. Identifying the gaps and challenges through organizing a technical meeting 2. Sharing best practices and collaboration in building resilient health system | Pakistan  Kazakhstan  Afghanistan  Turkey | TBD |  |
| 3 | Sharing best practices and collaboration in **Health Insurance System**, in service training of health professionals based on self-assessed needs of ECO Member States | 1. Short Training Course 2. Virtual Inter- country Meeting | Iran | TBD |  |
| 4 | Sharing experiences and best practices among ECO Member States to improve **Health Information Systems** in accordance with the international standards | 1. Short Training Course 2. Inter-country meeting for sharing experience and best practices 3. Group-based Problem Solving and Decision-Making meeting | Turkey | TBD |  |
| 5 | Strengthening the Health Work force | 1. One-year virtual training course on MPH along with degree | Iran | Q2/2024 |  |
| 6 | ECO Member states Collaboration on implementation of PHC Framework that was endorsed in WHA73- 2019 | * 1) Inter-country meeting for sharing experience and best practices and identifying gaps and challenges * 2) Joint planning to map and assess implementation of the PHC Framework based on country context * - Short-term Consultancy | Iran | TBD |  |
| 7 | Forth Meeting of the Heads of Blood Transfusion Organizations/Authorities of the ECO Member States | * 1)Technical meeting and review the current situation | Iran  Pakistan | TBD |  |
| 8 | Collaboration to increase access to medical products, vaccines and technologies | * 1) Sharing best practice * 2) establishment of a platform for identifying the emergency and non-emergency needs |  |  |  |

Priority 3. **Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the ECO Member States**

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| No. | **Project/Activity/Intervention** | **Modes of Activity** | **Suggested Lead**  **Country** | **Time Table** | **Priority/ Notes** |
| 1 | Supporting ECO Member States:- In preparation of national action plan for adaptation and implementation of global frameworks of non-communicable disease prevention, including indicators and nine voluntary global targets to integrate into PHC aiming to ensuring the availability of essential medication and continuity of care in high risk individuals and Patients with a Non- Communicable Diseases (PWANCD) in health sectors and beyond.-In developing a comprehensive guideline for rapid assessment and response for management of NCD in pandemics and disasters. -  -In developing a comprehensive guideline for rapid assessment and response for management of NCD in COVD19 pandemic and disasters. | 1) Virtual Inter-country Meeting   1. Short-term Consultancy   3) Workshop | Iran  Turkey  Azerbaijan | TBD |  |
| 2 | Supporting ECO Member States in collaboration for Mental health and accelerating implementation of WHO Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products | -1)Virtual Inter-country Meeting  2) Inter-parliamentary meeting | Afghanistan (MNTH)  Iran (FCTC)  Turkey | TBD |  |

Priority 4. **Communicable Diseases of Common Concerns i.e. TB, Malaria, HIV/AIDS, CCHF, Polio Disease and COVID-19**

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| **No.** | **Project/Activity/Intervention** | **Modes of Activity** | **Suggested Lead Country** | **Time Table** | **Priority/ Notes** |
| 1 | Facilitating inter-country collaboration in prevention, surveillance, control, and management of communicable diseases according to **IHR**: **COVID-19, Polio, Hepatitis, vector borne diseases, waterborne and other communicable Diseases** | 1)Virtual Inter-country meeting (with a focus on Cross-border meeting)  2)Short-term Consultancy  3) Conducting joint assessment of the surveillance system to identify the priorities, needs and gaps  4) Strengthening early warning, detection, investigation, data sharing and response to outbreaks/emerging and re-emerging diseases | Azerbaijan  Iran  Pakistan  Afghanistan  Turkmenistan  Turkey | TBD |  |
| 2 | ECO Member States' Collaboration on improvement of AMR surveillance system with focusing on One-Health approach | 1) Virtual Inter-country meeting on integrated people-centered health services to stop epidemics by 2025  2)Developing and sharing guidelines for community engagement and empowerment | Kyrgyzstan  Iran  Uzbekistan | TBD |  |

Priority 5. **Health related aspects of disasters and emergency, preparedness, monitoring and surveillance**

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| **No.** | **Project/Activity/Intervention** | **Modes of Activity** | **Suggested Lead**  **Country** | **Time Table** | **Priority/ Notes** |
| 1 | Exploring options for collaboration and experience sharing among ECO Member States for development of standards, tools, indicators and best practices in health services in emergencies and disasters | 1) Virtual Inter-country meeting for sharing experience and best practices  2) Group-based problem solving meeting | Iran  Pakistan  Turkey | TBD | - Emergency safety index  - Emergency medical service readiness  - Health system resiliency tools  - Disaster risk management accreditation  - Hospital preparedness tools in biological events  -National EMT training guideline |
| 2 | WHO-ECO Virtual Regional Meeting on Health in Emergencies and Disasters | -Virtual Regional Meeting  -Executive courses for disaster risk management through collaboration with member states | Iran | TBD | -Discuss disaster risk assessment models with focus on biological event  - Health system resiliency  - National response framework |
| 3 | Strengthening Leadership and Accountability for Risk Communication and Community Engagement in ECO Member States | 1) Virtual short course (in collaboration with UNICEF & WHO)  2) Virtual Inter-country meeting for sharing experience and best practices | Iran | TBD |  |