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## CONFERENCE ON “HEALTH IN THE MEDITERRANEAN”

Rome, 27-28 October 2014

### Concluding Remarks<sup>1</sup>

Accepting the invitation formulated by the Minister of Health of Italy, in collaboration with the European Commission (represented by the Commissioner for Public Health) and with the support of the World Health Organization – European and Eastern Mediterranean Regions, we, the Participants in the Conference on Health in the Mediterranean, all involved in the management of issues related to public health in the Mediterranean region, have met in Rome on October 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> under the auspices of the **Italian Presidency** of the Council of the EU.

The Conference has addressed important public health issues in order to promote progress, health and stability of the countries bordering the Mediterranean. It has offered the occasion to foster solidarity and partnership for better health systems in the Euro-Mediterranean area.

Participants, without prejudice to the power and responsibility of each Country/Organisation they represent, agreed on the opportunity of strengthening collaboration in some areas of common interest.

To this purpose, four areas that can benefit from a common activity have been identified, namely:

- implementation of the International Health Regulations
- health and migration
- healthy lifestyles, for the prevention of chronic diseases
- antimicrobials resistance.

Participants have agreed to prioritize exchange of information, experts interactions and to promote collaborative projects, taking advantage of existing public health structures in their Countries /Organizations.

### **International Health Regulations (IHR)**

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<sup>1</sup> These concluding remarks arise from a conference, which has received funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Health Programme (2014-2020).

With regard to the International Health Regulation (IHR), considering the recent crises, including the severe epidemic of Ebola in some western African Countries, Participants have recognized the importance of a full and effective implementation and application of IHR and of a real collaboration.

Participants, in particular, in relation to the international consequences that inadequate organization at the national level of individual Countries might have on the international community and on the population of the Mediterranean area, have considered a priority that Mediterranean Countries have a uniform and high level of preparedness, facilities and properly trained human resources, as foreseen by IHR.

To this purpose, Participants have asked for a constant and fruitful exchange of experiences and good practices, together with the strengthening of the exchange of information through the existing alert systems.

Participants have considered useful to encourage prevention practices such as vaccinations, for their effect on the circulation of pathogens, some of which potentially deadly, and have underlined the importance of having appropriate vaccination systems and plans in all Countries.

## **Health and Migration**

With regard to the relationship between migration and health, Participants have acknowledged the intense migratory flow that significantly affects the two sides of the Mediterranean.

Participants have recognized that the “Mare Nostrum” operation, organized and conducted by the Italian authorities, has contributed to reducing illegal migration and increasing the overall security of the area and of Europe and has been essential element for the protection of human life and the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases.

Without prejudice to the requirements of the protection of national integrity and security, Participants deemed that it is essential to guarantee, in the Mediterranean Countries, the availability and functioning of surveillance systems and sanitary controls on infectious diseases that can affect these population, in collaboration with specialized international Organizations.

Furthermore, Participants have considered that it is important to provide essential healthcare services to migrants, also for the diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases affecting them.

Finally, Participants have considered essential to promote equitable access to health services also for migrants that are socially integrated in the Country of destination, with the contribution of social services and cultural intermediation.

## **Lifestyles**

Participants have considered the fight against chronic non-communicable diseases an essential factor for all health systems.

Participants intend to work in full and loyal collaboration to contrast the diffusion of unhealthy nutrition habits and lifestyles, by committing themselves to projects, including multilateral ones, against tabagism, physical inactivity, excessive alcohol consumption, dietary excesses and nutrition imbalances.

Participants believe that interactions with other governmental authorities responsible for areas indirectly influencing the health status (infrastructure, education, environment and others) are essential to promote sustainable, healthy and fair development of our societies as a whole.

Participants intend, to this end, to reinforce the positive models arising from the Mediterranean tradition, especially in the food area, encouraging the use of traditional foods, produced in a safe and controlled manner, and the eating habits specific to each community, in order to safeguard tradition and diversity.

## **Antimicrobial resistance**

Participants have expressed their concern about the spread of antimicrobial resistance in all the Countries of the area.

Participants intend to work together on programmes and projects aimed at reducing the inappropriate use of antimicrobials.

At the same time, Participants intend to promote the creation of international laboratory networks suitable to supervise and monitor the development of resistance and to early identify the onset of such phenomenon in humans, animals and food.

Participants have underlined the importance of awareness campaigns for citizens, adequate for the context and the target they address, as harmonized as possible.

Participants also believe that, in order to achieve the defined objectives, a constant collaboration with international organizations working in the health field, especially WHO, OIE and FAO, is necessary.

Finally, Participants commit themselves to favor professional continuous training and education, considering that healthcare professionals represent a crucial element of the fight against AMR and the interface with citizens.

At the end of the meeting, there was an expression of appreciation for the efforts made by the Minister of Health of Italy and the European Commissioner, in collaboration with WHO Regional

Directors for having organized and convened this Conference, that represented a unique opportunity for enhancing current and future collaborations.

Rome, 28 October 2014