



International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness

COUNCIL OF MEMBERS MEETING

September 16th, 2012

AGENDA ITEM 4.6: EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL REPORT

EMR regional report April- September 2012

IAPB EMR participates in the 1st International conference on healthy lifestyles and Non-communicable diseases in the Arab world and Middle East, 10-12 September 2012, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

The IAPB-EMR and the Saudi National Prevention of Blindness Committee will be actively participating and making presentations at the '1st International conference on healthy lifestyles and Non-communicable diseases' in the Arab world and Middle East to be held from 10-12 September in Riyadh Saudi Arabia.

The conference is organized by Saudi Arabian Ministry of Health in collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean region. The meeting will focus on the implementation of the United Nations (UN) Political Declaration on Non-communicable Diseases in the Region. It will have in attendance high level WHO officials and representatives from ministries of health, foreign affairs and planning, the League of Arab States, United Nations funding agencies, programmes and agencies, international financial institutions, development banks and other key international organizations are expected to attend.

EMR leads advocacy efforts for a new action plan at the 65th WHA.

At the 65th World Health Assembly held in Geneva, 21-26 May 2012, the 23 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region represented by Saudi Arabia demonstrated a strong support for up scaling the control of avoidable blindness by calling for a new action plan for the period 2014-19, to replace the expiring plan of 2009-2013.

Other countries that expressed their support for the development of a new action plan included India, USA, Australia, Ethiopia and Mexico. However several Member States also expressed their concern on the inadequate resources and commitment made to implement the aspirations of the existing plan.

EMR countries request inclusion of Prevention of blindness as a priority in WHO work plan 2014-19

At the 65th World Health Assembly session on WHO reform (24 May, 2012, Geneva) during which the WHO General Program of Work (GPW) for the period 2014-19 was discussed Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) countries made intervention requesting WHO to include eye health and prevention of blindness as one of the priority areas of work in its next work plan called the GPW which is currently being developed. EMR has been a prime mover and main vanguard for championing regional and global policies for the success of eye health and prevention of blindness.

The region had always led in advocating prevention of blindness and visual impairment in previous meetings of World Health Assembly

Earlier on 22 May 2012 during a session on Non communicable disease (NCD) three countries (Saudi Arabia, Mauritania and the Holy see (Vatican) all spoke about the importance of the blindness and visual impairment agenda.

Saudi Arabia concludes 3rd RAAB +DR survey

The Saudi National Prevention of Blindness Committee and the Ministry of Health have completed the 3rd RAAB +DR survey in AlAhsa region of the Kingdom. This brings to three the number of RAAB DR surveys conducted in the Kingdom in the last one and half years.

The surveys are aimed to provide data needed to review eye care and diabetic retinopathy services in the Kingdom. The surveys were done with collaboration of IMPACT-EMR and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and King Saud University.

2,000 Cataract surgeries conducted in Somalia in cooperation with WHO

The IHH humanitarian relief foundation -an international NGO based in Turkey in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) Eastern Mediterenean Regional Office had conducted 2,000 cataract surgeries across Somalia from April this year. The surgeries were spread across Somaliland (1,000), Puntland (600) and Mogadishu (400). Turkish medical teams along with local doctors performed the first group of cataract surgeries in Somaliland Hargaise. IHH, has so far sponsored 61,750 cataract surgeries across Africa, 10,000 of which were in Somalia.