

Key questions and talking points
to guide discussions during the ministerial lunch

Ministerial lunch, Monday, 12 September 2016
12:30–14:30, Lounge Area 1

1. What lessons have you learned in working to achieve elimination of a major communicable disease that can be applied to other diseases and/or emerging challenges?
2. Do you have effective mechanisms in place (such as, political commitment, financial and human resources, institutional support, and so on) to aid in achieving your elimination goals or maintaining your disease-free status?
3. What major challenges or existing gaps would you like to see addressed within your specific national or local context?
4. What support does your country need from the Regional Office to progress towards achieving elimination or maintaining disease-free status?

**Eliminating communicable diseases
in the WHO European Region:
*reaching regional and global targets***



Lessons from a polio-free Europe:
towards eliminating measles, rubella,
mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis, and
maintaining malaria-free status

Millennium Development Goals' legacy

Controlling infectious diseases is the cornerstone of public health. The Millennium Development Goals established an inspiring legacy in the global fight against major infectious diseases. Many 2015 targets have already been achieved or are close to being reached in the WHO European Region.

- The European Region is the first in the world to achieve interruption of indigenous **malaria** transmission; with a steep decline in the number of cases from over 90 000 in 1995 to zero two decades later.
- Thirty-two countries in the European Region successfully interrupted transmission of endemic **measles** and/or **rubella** by 2015, as confirmed by the European Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination (RVC).
- **Mother-to-child** transmission (MTCT) accounted for only 1% of new cases of HIV infection in the European Region in 2014. Three countries in the Region, out of five globally, were validated for elimination of MTCT of HIV and/or congenital syphilis and more countries are in the validation process.

Remaining challenges

While tremendous progress has been made in the European Region, serious challenges continue to exist.

- Until malaria is eradicated globally, people traveling to and from malaria-endemic countries can import the disease to Europe and initiate its resurgence.
- Gaps in surveillance and immunization coverage jeopardize elimination of measles and rubella in the remaining endemic countries of the Region.
- The fastest-growing HIV epidemic worldwide is in the eastern part of the European Region, and low prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in some countries hamper efforts to eliminate MTCT of HIV and congenital syphilis.

Health 2020 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Reaching the targets of the Health 2020 framework and the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda requires concerted action of Member States in the European Region to address challenges and:

- avoid malaria reintroduction and resurgence will help end the global epidemic of **malaria**;
- ensure equitable access for all to safe, effective, high-quality, affordable vaccines is essential for eliminating endemic **measles and rubella**;
- eliminate **MTCT** of HIV and congenital syphilis will contribute to the global effort to combat STIs and end AIDS.

Next steps

Maintain regional malaria-free status

To sustain the European Region's **malaria-free status**, countries at risk of malaria resurgence need to implement the *Regional framework for prevention of malaria reintroduction and certification of malaria elimination* and:

- sustain political and financial commitment to malaria control efforts;
- strengthen vigilance to catch every malaria case and treat all malaria cases promptly;
- know how malaria transmission could be reintroduced and the risk it poses;
- act immediately if local malaria transmission resumes.

Achieve regional measles and rubella elimination

To achieve regional **measles and rubella elimination**, in line with the *European Vaccine Action Plan*, endemic countries need to:

- vaccinate $\geq 95\%$ of the general population with two doses of measles and at least one dose of rubella vaccine;
- reach all people at risk for and susceptible to measles and/or rubella;
- detect early suspected cases and outbreaks through strong surveillance;
- provide sound information to health professionals and the public on the benefits and risks associated with vaccination against measles and rubella.

Eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis in the Region

To eliminate **mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis** (dual elimination), all countries need to work within the framework of the *Action plan on the health sector response to HIV in the WHO European Region* and:

- to ensure universal access to free services for antenatal care;
- to test pregnant women and their partners for HIV and syphilis;
- to treat pregnant women who test positive;
- to detect early, prevent and treat exposed and infected infants;
- to provide free infant formula for affected children;
- to engage the community.