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**Fourteenth Standing Committee of the Regional Committee
Report of the sixth session**

This document contains the report of the sixth session of the Fourteenth Standing Committee of the Regional Committee (SCRC), held in Belgrade, Serbia on Sunday 16 September 2007. It should be read in conjunction with the consolidated report of the Fourteenth SCRC (document EUR/RC57/4).

Introduction

1. The Fourteenth Standing Committee of the Regional Committee (SCRC) held its sixth session at the National Assembly in Belgrade, Serbia on Sunday, 16 September 2007, the day before the opening of the fifty-seventh session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (RC57).
2. In his introduction, the Regional Director noted that the substantive items on the proposed agenda of RC57 were matters of increasing international concern.

Report of the fifth session of the Fourteenth SCRC

3. The report of the fifth session of the Fourteenth SCRC, held at WHO headquarters in Geneva on 13 May 2007, was adopted without amendment.

Review of the provisional programme of RC57

4. After the opening of RC57, the remainder of the Monday morning meeting would be devoted to the Regional Director's report. His presentation would be followed by statements by two guest speakers, the Director for Public Health at the European Commission (EC) and one of the goodwill ambassadors of the WHO Regional Office for Europe (EURO).
5. The Monday afternoon meeting would begin with consideration of the report of the SCRC and of matters arising from resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board; the latter topic would be introduced by the Executive Board member attending SCRC sessions as an observer. The end of the afternoon would be devoted to a substantive item: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the WHO European Region, focusing on health systems and the health of mothers and children. As previously agreed, Dr Francesco Cicogna would introduce the item by presenting the SCRC's views on the subject: in doing so, he intended to underline the importance of the issue; to note that, while progress was being made in terms of regional averages, the picture was much more differentiated and unequal at national and subnational levels; and to reiterate the view that reaching the goals would require a multisectoral and health system-wide approach. The item would be presented by the Deputy Regional Director, who would also be followed by two guest speakers, representing the World Bank and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
6. The programme on the Tuesday morning had been amended to allow for the President of Serbia to address the Regional Committee. His address would be followed by that of the WHO Director-General. The rest of the Tuesday morning would be devoted to follow-up of topics discussed at previous Regional Committee sessions, beginning with the Ministerial Conference on Counteracting Obesity and action taken to implement the European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (two topics that were closely linked). During the discussion of work done on strengthening health systems, the representative of Estonia would extend a formal invitation to countries to attend the forthcoming WHO European Ministerial Conference on Health Systems (Tallin, 25–27 June 2008). The update on health security would reflect the broader approach (including natural disasters) taken by the Regional Office in line with the decision of RC56 and further elaborated in the report issued in conjunction with World Health Day 2007. The Tuesday morning meeting would conclude with consideration of the report of the European Environment and Health Committee, presented by its Chairman, Professor William Dab.
7. The Standing Committee noted that seven of its nine current members had expressed an interest in being part of the drafting group established to draw up a charter for adoption at the Ministerial Conference on Health Systems. The SCRC agreed that its Chairman should mention the Conference when he reported on the work done by the Standing Committee, encouraging all Member States to participate in

the process of drafting the charter and recalling the links with the values endorsed at the WHO Conference on European Health Care Reforms held in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in June 1996.

8. Exceptionally, the whole of the Tuesday afternoon meeting would be devoted to one item, health workforce policies in the WHO European Region. Dr Bjørn-Inge Larsen, the SCRC member who would introduce the item, intended to focus on demographic trends and the uneven distribution of human resources for health in the Region, pointing out the need for a unified policy, an ethical framework for recruitment of the health workforce and an agreed common data set. The first part of the afternoon would then be spent on discussion of the technical aspects of the issue (led by the Secretariat, supported by a panel of experts), while the more political aspects (including the draft resolution) would be taken up in the second part of the meeting. It was expected that statements would be made by representatives of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank, among others. The SCRC underlined the need for the Regional Committee to adopt an inclusive approach whereby all European Member States would be able to agree on the general direction, in particular for solving problems related to migration of the health workforce (not only from one country to another but also between rural and urban areas).

9. The meeting on Wednesday morning would begin with consideration of the Second European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy. The item would be introduced by Dr Mihály Kökény, who intended to recall the extensive process of consultation that had taken place and to emphasize the challenges of developing sound multisectoral policy and achieving a critical mass for taking action. It was likely that statements would be made by representatives of Portugal (on behalf of member countries of the European Union (EU) and of UNICEF. The Regional Director noted that the discussion would be attended (at their request) by representatives of the Confederation of the Food and Drink Industries of the EU (CIAA). The SCRC welcomed their inclusion and recommended that it should discuss, at one of its future sessions, the relationship between WHO and the “outside world” in the form of industry bodies, pressure groups, etc.

10. By way of introduction to the agenda item on the date and place of forthcoming regular sessions of the Regional Committee, reference would be made to the discussions held and the recommendation made by the SCRC.

11. Following the private meeting at the start of Wednesday afternoon, when the Regional Committee would nominate or elect countries to membership of various bodies, it was expected that two topics would be taken up under the agenda item “Other matters”. The first concerned an unsolicited offer by Greece to provide premises and funding that would enable the Regional Office to establish a geographically dispersed office in that country in support of the priority area of noncommunicable diseases. The SCRC intended to seek the Regional Committee’s agreement to allow the Regional Director to explore the offer and its implications for the Regional Office’s further work. Once more detailed information had been obtained, the SCRC should be informed at one of its forthcoming sessions.

12. The second topic that would most likely be taken up under “Other matters” concerned public health, innovation and intellectual property. A meeting had been held at the Regional Office on 27–28 August 2007, in preparation for the second session of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property, to be held at WHO headquarters in Geneva on 5–10 November 2007. Participants in the Copenhagen meeting had asked for the item to be included on the agenda of RC57. The item would be introduced by one of the vice-chairmen of the IGWG.

Membership of WHO bodies and committees

13. The SCRC reached agreement on the candidates that it would recommend for membership of the Executive Board, the Standing Committee of the Regional Committee, the Joint Coordinating Board of the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, and the European Environment and Health Committee.

Role and way of working of the SCRC

14. The Fourteenth SCRC endorsed the report of the small working group that it had established at its second session and thanked its members for the work they had done. It agreed that the report should be made available to new members of the SCRC (as well as to Member States, on request) and decided that the information note contained in Annex 2 to document EUR/RC56/SC(6)/6 should be made available on the Regional Office's internet website.

Draft plan of work of the Fifteenth SCRC

15. The SCRC recognized that it was traditionally involved in a number of items that had been included in its draft plan of work for 2007–2008. In addition, it agreed that at its November 2007 session it would consider the question of the Regional Office's relations with the private sector. It would also be informed of the outcome of the first meeting of the group drafting the charter for the Ministerial Conference and, more generally, it would be in a better position to engage in the broad orientations of preparations for that conference.

Conclusion

16. The outgoing members of the SCRC expressed their gratitude for having been able to participate in an enjoyable and educational working process, while the Chairman testified to the privilege he had felt in leading such a hardworking, productive and friendly group of colleagues.