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Resolution

Health workforce policies in the European Region

The Regional Committee,

Recalling World Health Assembly resolutions WHA57.19 and WHA58.17 on the international migration of health personnel: a challenge for health systems in developing countries that urged Member States and requested WHO to develop strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of the migration of health personnel in order to minimize its negative impacts on health systems; and resolutions WHA59.23 on the rapid scaling up of health workforce production that urged Member States and requested WHO to facilitate the activities to scale up the production of a competent health workforce in countries; and WHA59.27 on the strengthening of nursing and midwifery that urged and requested Member States and WHO to establish comprehensive programmes for the development of a highly skilled and motivated nursing and midwifery workforce;

Recalling also its resolutions EUR/RC50/R5 and EUR/RC55/R8 on cooperation with countries and strengthening European health systems as a continuation of the WHO Regional Office for Europe's Country Strategy "Matching services to new needs" that urged Member States to ensure that appropriate attention is paid to the quality and skills of human resources;

Acknowledging that educated and well-trained health workers save lives, that the functioning of health systems depends on the availability, efforts and skill mix of the workforce and relies on their knowledge, skills and motivation;

Recognizing the crucial importance of human resources in strengthening health systems, managing and delivering health services, and ensuring the quality of their performance;

Recognizing that the health workforce should be appropriate to people's health needs and that social, demographic, epidemiological and economic circumstances remain a challenge for the attainment of health for all;

Recognizing the diversities that exist in the composition, distribution and dynamics of the health workforce within and between countries in the Region; and the influence of ageing of both the population and the health workforce, and of technological innovations and environmental changes on health workers;

Noting with concern the geographical and skill-mix imbalances in the health workforce and the increased migration of health workers in the Region;

Having considered document EUR/RC57/9 on Health workforce policies in the WHO European Region;

1. ENDORSES the recommendations contained in the report;
2. URGES Member States:
 - (a) to improve and expand the information and knowledge base on the health workforce at country level, where appropriate in order to strengthen information systems, encourage research and build capacities in policy analysis, planning and implementation related to human resources for health;
 - (b) to develop, embed and mainstream policies concerning human resources for health as a component of health systems development, and to take responsibility for the development of human resources plans and strategies relevant to the needs of the country including a balanced distribution of the workforce within countries, ensuring their implementation;
 - (c) to assess the trends in and impact of health workforce migration in order to identify and act on effective migration-related policy options, including establishing agreements with other countries to address the movement of health workers, based on the principles of transparency, ethics, fairness and mutual benefits;
 - (d) to orient, where appropriate, workforce planning towards achievement of health for all, in primary health care as a first step;

3. REQUESTS the Regional Director:

- (a) to cooperate with and support Member States in their efforts to improve their health workforce;
- (b) to continue to build and support capacities in health workforce policy development, planning and management at national level and in the WHO European Region as a whole, and to facilitate and promote the harmonization of health workforce data and the use of standard indicators and tools to improve quality and comparability;
- (c) to develop a core set of health workforce indicators to be used for monitoring and evaluation of the current situation and trends at national and WHO European regional levels, and to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, information, experience and evidence in effective health workforce development and management among Member States and partners;
- (d) to develop recommendations to set up systems for stimulating and motivating the health workforce to work in remote and rural areas, as well as mechanisms for professional development;
- (e) to give high priority to monitoring health worker migration and policy interventions at national and international levels through the continuing analysis of country reports and the publication of annual regional syntheses of those reports;
- (f) to facilitate the development of an ethical guide/framework for international recruitment of health workers into and within the European Region;
- (g) to ensure that the health workforce remains a priority of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, in the context of strengthening health systems, and to mobilize resources to support countries in the area of health workforce development, in line with the WHO Medium-term strategic plan;
- (h) to continue building and strengthening networks and partnerships that contribute to establishing sustainable human resources for health in the Region, and to advocate with national stakeholders, development partners, international agencies, donors and all relevant programmes within WHO that more effective investment should be made in health workforce development and better resource coordination;
- (i) to put health workforce policies on the agenda of the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Health Systems in 2008;
- (j) to report back to the Regional Committee at its fifty-ninth session in 2009 on the progress made.