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**Proposal for establishment of the European Centre for the Prevention
and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in Athens, Greece**

The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of Greece has approached the WHO Regional Director for Europe with a proposal to help strengthen the work of the WHO Regional Office for Europe by establishing a centre or geographically dispersed office (GDO) of the Regional Office in Athens. The Regional Director considers that such a centre could focus on noncommunicable diseases, including mental health, in order to strengthen the Regional Office's work in this important area following the adoption of the European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases by the Regional Committee at its fifty-sixth session.

In line with the strategy on GDOs adopted by the Regional Committee at its fifty-fourth session (resolution EUR/RC54/R6), this proposal is submitted to the Regional Committee for consideration.

Background

1. The possibility of establishing a centre or geographically dispersed office (GDO) of the WHO Regional Office for Europe (EURO) in Greece has been assessed and is found to be in conformity with the guidelines for GDOs set out in document EUR/RC54/9.
 - If the need for a GDO matches the interest of one or several host countries, it should be clearly ascertained, before a final decision is made, that the programme area is a priority in the Regional Office programme and that there is a potential for achieving technical excellence and establishing a wide partnership.
 - A GDO is a fully integrated unit of EURO. All the rules and procedures applying to a Copenhagen-based entity apply also to the GDO.

Objectives

2. The main objectives of the WHO European Centre on Noncommunicable Diseases will be:
 - to contribute to reducing the burden of disease (mortality, morbidity and disability) caused by NCDs in the European Region; and
 - to help Member States to implement the NCD strategy adopted by the Regional Committee at its fifty-sixth session.

Areas of work

3. The Centre will focus on NCDs as major contributors, both now and in the foreseeable future, to the burden of disease in Europe. For a number of reasons, work on NCDs has been historically underfunded in WHO compared with work on the most pressing communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and vaccine-preventable diseases.
4. In response to this, the Regional Committee adopted the European Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (resolution EUR/RC56/R2). The Regional Office therefore welcomes the proposal of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of Greece to create a specialized European centre on NCDs within EURO as one of its geographically dispersed offices.
5. More specifically, the Centre will support Member States in the WHO European Region in better understanding and fighting NCDs in line with the European Strategy, as summarized by the following key messages, to which Member States' health systems are expected to respond:
 - prevention throughout life as an effective investment in health and development;
 - creation of health-supporting environments, making healthy choices the easier choices;
 - making health and medical services fit for purpose, responding to the current disease burden and increasing opportunities for health promotion;
 - empowering people to promote their own health, interact with health services effectively and be active partners in managing disease;
 - ensuring universal access to health promotion, disease prevention and health care services, in order to achieve equity in health; and
 - ensuring that governments at all levels build healthy public policies and act across all sectors concerned.

6. The Centre will provide services to the 53 Member States in the WHO European Region, by working in the six areas within the “Composite framework for action on NCD” as included in the European NCD Strategy (advocacy, knowledge, regulation and financing, capacities, community support and health services delivery). All its actions will be informed by evidence and guided by the relevant WHO strategies and action plans to which Member States have already committed themselves, as well as drawing on the values and “toolbox” of the Health for All policy framework.

7. The WHO European Centre on Noncommunicable Diseases will support Member States in three areas, as set out below.

Strengthening bilateral and multilateral international cooperation

8. Work in this area will include:

- facilitating of political commitment by highlighting investment in NCD prevention and control as an important issue for the political agenda at country level;
- setting up mechanisms for taking action on health determinants through a multisectoral approach, particularly for supranational issues; and
- developing an alliance for advocacy and action on NCDs that will bring together the major international players in Europe.

Facilitating of information exchanges, technical cooperation and capacity-building

9. This area will entail the following activities, among others:

- strengthening WHO’s role as a clearing house for relevant information in support of countries;
- increasing coordination, consistency and synergy between relevant programmes that address different aspects of NCD prevention and control at country level;
- developing tools for implementation, communication and monitoring; and
- publishing case studies and examples of good practice.

Research, monitoring and surveillance

10. The following approaches will be adopted in this area:

- joining together with other agencies to improve NCD surveillance within countries and across Europe;
- developing and adapting indicators for monitoring and measuring progress; and
- identifying gaps and means of carrying out research on issues of public health importance.

Management of the Centre

11. The mission of the WHO Centre in Athens will be to support EURO’s vision, values and objectives in repositioning itself towards country work, and in line with the main aim of WHO’s European Country Strategy, i.e. to “support Member States in developing their own health policies, health systems and public health programmes; preventing and overcoming threats to health; anticipating future challenges; and advocating public health”.

12. The WHO Centre in Athens will be managed along the same principles as EURO’s other GDOs. Its organizational structure and activities will form an integral part of EURO and shall be in accordance with the Constitution, rules, regulations and policies of WHO.

13. As with any other centre or unit, EURO will be responsible for the overall direction, guidance and management of the work of the Centre. The Centre will be managed by the Head of the Centre, who will be appointed by the Regional Director. Specific attention will be paid to properly articulating and balancing the work of the Athens Centre (content, programmes, activities, etc.) with that of other relevant programmes in various EURO locations. Final selection of all staff of the WHO Centre in Athens will be decided by EURO.

14. The strategic plan and budget of the WHO Centre in Athens will be included in EURO's overall strategic programme budget. Preparation, implementation and evaluation of the work plan will follow normal EURO procedures.

15. Detailed financial and other conditions will be agreed between the Government of Greece and EURO. The Government of Greece will be responsible for providing an appropriate building and equipment of a standard similar to and fully compliant with that used in EURO. The WHO flag and emblem shall be used in accordance with the WHO Flag Code and Regulations, and relevant resolutions and policies.