

Regional Committee for Europe

EUR/RC69/TD/2

69th session

Copenhagen, Denmark, 16–19 September 2019

6 September 2019

190413

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Technical briefing on health diplomacy and migration

**Tuesday, 17 September 2019
13:00–14:30, Lounge area 7**

Background

1. Migration is a high priority on the political and policy agendas of most Member States of the WHO European Region. The steady increase in population movements is also influencing the global health agenda, which is understandable given that it is estimated that there will be over 200 million migrants by 2050. Human mobility is relevant to all countries and generates important challenges in terms of sustainable development and human rights, ending discrimination and ensuring equality, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. The health of refugees and migrants is closely linked to the health of host communities; one cannot exist without the other, in the context of efforts to achieve gender equality, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, safe, resilient and sustainable communities, and inclusive and peaceful societies. In addition, the public health aspects of migration are often falsely filtered through security concerns, myths, misconceptions and xenophobia, which must be addressed using a strong, coordinated, multisectoral, evidence-based approach.
3. The relationships between population mobility, health, foreign policy and diplomacy have long been acknowledged. Over recent years, within the field of global health diplomacy, migration has been identified as an issue deserving special attention due to the necessity for health cooperation between countries. Migration and health has become a specialized and politicized area of health diplomacy, with some political forces advocating the benefits of globalization and human mobility, and others emphasizing the sovereignty of nation States and the seriousness of migration-related challenges.

Objectives of the briefing

4. The main objectives of the technical briefing are:
 - to reflect on the increasing attention being paid to the links between migration, health systems' design, health diplomacy and various fields of international relations;

- to provide the perspective of the WHO Regional Office for Europe on the management of public health aspects of migration over the last decade;
- to present insights into the role of national and subnational actors in understanding and addressing the systemic governance barriers to, and enablers necessary for, improving the health and well-being of refugees and migrants through innovative and transformative models of governance for health and well-being;
- to showcase good practices by which governments and non-State actors, including international and nongovernmental organizations, are attempting to address the complexity of migrant health issues at the global, regional and country levels, as well as at the city level, through efforts to strengthen health systems' responsiveness and by coordinating and developing foreign policy solutions;
- to discuss how migration-related health issues have guided current foreign policy initiatives.
- to launch the book entitled "Health diplomacy: spotlight on refugees and migrants".

Format of the briefing

5. The briefing will start with a presentation on the definitions of global health diplomacy and introduce the five pillars of global health diplomacy. An overview of the Regional Office's challenges and achievements in the field of public health and migration will also be provided. During these presentations, the book "Health diplomacy: spotlight on refugees and migrants" will be launched. The presentations will be followed by a moderated panel discussion involving global, national and subnational policy-makers, including authors of the above-mentioned book, who will share their experiences and represent the global, country, city, WHO country office and nongovernmental organization perspectives.

6. The floor will then be opened for questions. The briefing will conclude with closing remarks by the president of the session.

Expected outcomes

7. The expected outcomes of this session are as follows:
- participants will understand the key concepts of health diplomacy;
 - participants will have an increased awareness of the relevance of migration as an issue deserving special attention in the field of global health diplomacy;
 - participants will have been updated on the work of the Regional Office in addressing refugees' and migrants' health needs through health diplomacy;
 - participants will be provided with insights into the innovative and transformative models of governance for health and well-being that are used to address the systemic governance barriers to improving the health and well-being of refugees and migrants;

- the book “Health diplomacy: spotlight on refugees and migrants” will have been launched and participants will have been provided with a suite of examples of migration-related health issues that have challenged decision-makers, governments and non-State actors, and how these actors have successfully overcome those challenges and guided current foreign policy initiatives.

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