

**Statement of I.R. Iran on
“Framework for Strengthening Health Laboratory Services 2016–2023”**

**Mr./Madam Chairperson,
Excellences, ladies and gentlemen**

I.R.Iran praises WHO-EMRO efforts to support the implementation of this framework as a strong platform for transforming national laboratory systems. Considering the report, our suggestions on the six strategic goals are as follows:

As to leadership and governance, a directorate general (unified leadership) in MoH-ME i.e., Reference Health Laboratory (RHL) developed National Laboratory Policy and Strategic Plan (NLPSP) and National Laboratory Standard and guidelines (based on international standards) which are mandatory for licensing and re-licensing of laboratories.

Strategy 1: We suggest WHO to increase efforts in holding high-level face-to-face meeting/s with ministerial excellences of the region to advocate the importance of development of such NLPSP and the importance of its endorsement by all stakeholders.

Strategy 2: To improve the quality of laboratory services, in addition to establishing widespread National External Quality Assessment Schemes (N-EQAS), RHL implements Regional-EQAS since 2005. 30 control samples in viral Serology, Parasitology and Mycology are sent to 20 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region twice a year. However, we struggle transporting samples due to sanctions and need a courier service supported by WHO.

Strategy 3 & 4: To strengthen human resources capabilities and biosafety, various quality/safety-related virtual training programs were launched; therefore, laboratory personnel (even in district areas of the country) have access to training materials. RHL is trying to educate all laboratory personnel on Bio-risk management requirements.

RHL established a tiered laboratory network, with defined service map at different levels, to improve equitable access to timely laboratory services. Establishing “COVID-19 molecular laboratory network” with more than 500 labs was a great success in management of the pandemic. This network provides a remarkable capacity, which can leverage into surveillance of other epidemic-prone diseases such as CCHF, Dengue Fever, Monkey pox, Chikungunya and so on. However, shortage of essential consumables, and old or inadequately serviced equipment as a consequence of sanctions, sometimes threatens service provision and WHO high support is necessary to make such a regional asset sustainable.

Overutilization and/or miss-utilization of laboratory testing (resulting to patient safety compromise and waste of laboratory resources) has remained a challenge due to ever-expanding test menu and lack of protocols for rational ordering of laboratory tests in some contexts.

We believe endorsement of WHO framework by regional countries, promotes collective actions towards a common goal i.e., providing equitable access to quality, safe and timely laboratory services.

RHL as a WHO Collaborating Center, for almost 30 years, offers to share experiences between countries in achieving the strategic goals and objectives at the national, regional as well as international level.

Madam/Mr. chair, thank you for the floor.

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