Statement of Islamic Republic of Iran on the Regional cervical cancer elimination strategy

Dear Chairperson, excellencies and colleagues

Cervical cancer in the Eastern Mediterranean region has a range from low to high incidence, however, in many countries, the incidence is below or close to the threshold specified as the cervical cancer elimination target. Therefore, setting specific strategies and goals for EMR is an important task.

I.R.Iran, is a leading country in the program especially in the field of screening, and has played an active role in the advisory group for developing the regional strategies during the past few months. Choosing specific targets for the EMR region that represent the achievement of the CCE initiative goals is a smart move.

For example, the cervical cancer mortality/incidence ratio can monitor the implementation of strategic action 3 (namely, to reduce the burden of suffering caused by cervical cancer) and strategic action 2 (namely, to improve cervical cancer screening and pre-cancer treatment) is measurable by relative reduction indicator. However, the strategic action 1 (namely, to strengthen primary prevention through improvements in HPV vaccine delivery and coverage) cannot be achieved by neither "mortality/incidence ratio" nor "relative reduction". Therefore, we strongly recommend the "HPV prevalence" as the main indicator to monitor implementation of strategic action 1.

It is of note that in the EMR countries with low incidence of cervical cancer, convincing health policy makers to implement the strategies 1 (vaccination) and 2 (screening) is not an easy task. Therefore, another function of the HPV prevalence index is that it can be used to get key stakeholders support to the entire cervical cancer elimination strategies, highlighting the fact that despite the low incidence of cervical cancer in most EMR states, the prevalence of HPV is high at the same time, which is a warning sign for the high incidence of HPV related malignancies in the next two decades.

Thank you for your attention