



**Sixty-fourth Session**

**WHO-EMRO-Islamabad declaration for improving access to Assistive Technology**

Today, Government of Pakistan has the honour of hosting the side event on improving access to assistive technology during the 64 Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee Meeting. It is a great pleasure to have so many dignitaries from other Eastern Mediterranean Regional Member States who are attending this important side event. Considering its relevance particularly in the region, under the leadership of the honourable federal minister, H.E. Saira Afzal Tarar and in collaboration with the Member States, the Government of Pakistan is working at all levels within WHO to improve access to assistive technology.

Need of assistive technology is on increase. However, still it is quite misunderstood sector and there are not many national policies and programmes in the region. Conflicts and wars are increasing the demand. People in the region could benefit and have a healthy and productive life provided they have access to assistive technology. Global statistics estimates that only 10% of the population in need have access to assistive technology. We are sure estimate will be similar in the Eastern Mediterranean region. We have lot to catch up.

To push the agenda further in the region, during 63 Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee, member states passed a Resolution for improving access to assistive technology (EM/RC63/R.3) in October 2016. Resolution specifically asked for sharing of good practices within the region to assist EMR countries to develop appropriate National Assistive Technology programme. This side event is a first step towards it and from here, we therefore propose the following:

1. We will include access to assistive technology within Universal Health Coverage
2. We will organize an Assistive Technology Eastern Mediterranean Regional Meeting to develop a regional road map to improve access to assistive technology with key actions and good practice
3. We will work towards developing a regional assistive technology resource centre to promote research, innovation and academic programmes.
4. We will collect better data on the need and unmet need of assistive technology
5. We will provide necessary impetus for a WHO resolution on improving access to assistive technology in 142 Executive Board discussions and subsequently, in 71 World Health Assembly.

**Declaration adopted on behalf of the Member States of Eastern Mediterranean Region**

**H.E. Ms Saira Afzal Tarar**

Federal Minister for Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination  
Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan