

***Report on Progress of Implementation of Resolution on Antimicrobial Resistance adopted by the Assembly in 2005.***

Also today, the Assembly received the report of discussion about progress achieved in implementing the resolution on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) during the past two years. Thailand asked a number of questions of the Director General: what activities at regional and sub-regional level have been done since the resolution was adopted in 2005; what activities have been carried out to support national programs for surveillance? In the absence of evidence of activities in implementing the resolution, Thailand asked for an acceleration of activities on this issue and identification of what is stopping activity. It also asked for further information on a plan for continuing work on AMR in 2008/2009.

Denmark on behalf of the Nordic countries, noting the limited progress and the increasing possibility of devastation to all countries should no action be taken, asked WHO to take global leadership on the issue, to act to help countries reduce the irrational use of antibiotics by implementing the RUM resolution, and to place the issue of AMR at the core of communicable diseases programs. It requested a strong progress report in 2009. Japan, USA and Philippines spoke in support of the need for more activity to help countries contain AMR along these lines.

Iran spoke strongly on behalf of EMRO countries. It welcomed the RUM resolution as providing a mechanism, though an inter-sectoral task force, whereby AMR can be placed as a subset of its work to make sure that various efforts do not remain disjointed and ineffective. Until countries can enforce their own regulations in relation to sale of antibiotics and develop health systems with health insurance, out of pocket expenditure and sales of OTC antibiotics will remain a problem. Sustainable investment to build these is needed. Many countries can show the overuse of antibiotics, but surveillance of AMR is weak and so countries are not aware of the size of the problem. It may be those very countries without a surveillance system that have the biggest problem.

Going on to expand on the issue, Iran noted that successful action is linked to infection control, RUM and development of new antibiotics, which are slow to develop as also the case for Malaria TB and HIV/AIDS. Second generation antibiotics are available but out of reach of those who need them most. Hence the access issue re-emerges. Therefore the countries in EMRO called for resources to be invested to address what is the most important public health issue of our time.

There seems to be strong alignment on the need for WHO to help countries address RUM and the irrational use of antibiotics as a priority. Now is time to work together inside and outside WHO to implement workable strategies for RUM and AMR..