World Malaria Day Address

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Bushehr, Iran

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• This year, the theme for World Malaria Day is “Invest in the Future – Defeat Malaria.”

• Today, we are gathered here in the historic city of Bushehr to share our knowledge and recommit ourselves to defeating this disease.

• A perspective on our progress to date is in order:
  o In 2013, there were 198 million cases, and 584 000 deaths from Malaria.
  o 3.2 billion (half of the world’s population) are still at risk.
  o In 2014, 97 countries had on-going malaria transmission.
  o But we are also here to celebrate the fact that between 2000 and 2013, the global malaria mortality rate fell 47%.
  o An estimated 4.2 million lives were saved as a result of a scale-up of malaria interventions.

• A significant part of that success was recorded right here in Iran.

• So, while we consider the necessary future investments to defeat malaria, let us also spend some time here today to reflect on the great achievements made in Iran – even just in the past year – to eliminate malaria.

• Our achievements are to be commended, and in no small part because of our commitment to working together as partners to combat this deadly disease.

• Let’s talk about these partnerships.

• The key partnerships which have delivered success in Iran are between MOH/CDC, the WHO, a number of Universities of Medical Sciences, the Global Fund and UNDP.

• Together we have achieved a great deal in to eliminate malaria.

• While Iran is still affected by numerous imported malaria cases along its eastern borders, the MOH’s most recent malaria report indicates that local malaria cases have fallen:
  o from 5,594 in 2008 – as a result of these partnerships – to
  o 366 in 2014
• That is a 94% reduction.
• In the space of only 6 years.

• In 2014 alone, in strengthening the health system to beat malaria, we achieved the following outcomes:

  o Based on the results of the program review and Global Technical Strategy for malaria Control, the new New Strategic Plan for malaria elimination for the period of 2015-2020 has been developed through a consultative process
    ▪ led by WHO
    ▪ and in collaboration with CDC/Malaria Elimination Department, UNDP and Universities of Medical Silences.

  o Over 370 RDT passive posts in the poorer rural area of Sistan and Baluchistan were established. This was done in collaboration with local women volunteers as a symbol of community participation in malaria elimination.

  o A web-based national malaria registration database, was put into practice in 2014 for the first time in the history of the country.

  o Even more importantly, in order to sustain our partnership after the ending of the Global Fund project, and in cooperation with CDC and the Universities of Medical Sciences, we have the development of an Operation Plan for the peripheral level at province and district levels.

  o This guarantees field alignment of the Plan of Action with the new National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination.

  o And it provides a standard baseline for allocating national resources and progress monitoring.

  o This initiative, we hope, can be a symbol for the results-based management of the country’s health programme.

• So, all in all, Iran is now in the **pre-elimination phase**.
• Iran is classified as being among countries capable of achieving malaria elimination.

• But we still face challenges.

• Cross-border movement of population from malaria-endemic countries, particularly with our eastern neighbours, poses a serious challenge for achieving malaria elimination in Iran.

• Therefore, despite the reduction of malaria cases in recent years, the risk of re-introduction is high.

• Indeed, in 2014, we were confronted with a re-introduction of local malaria transmission right here in Bushehr province.

• In the history of malaria in Iran, the malaria elimination programme had a vertical (independent) health structure where the programme was implemented separately to the other health systems.

• However, back in 1988, the programme was integrated successfully into the health system resulting in a better use of resources to provide better services.

• Now, we need to go further, and as has been mentioned in the new NSP, to the degree possible, we must integrate services in other sectors including public and private sectors and community framework in line with the multi-sectoral approach.

• As we have seen, there has been progress at both the global level and here in Iran.

• It is true that we need to invest on a global scale.

• But we also need to invest more on a local scale – here in Iran.

• So, the United Nations Secretary-General says in this year’s message:
  o “We have a real opportunity to defeat this terrible disease. Let’s not waste it.”

• Let’s invest in the future and eliminate malaria from Iran.

• Thank you.