

CHMM - Agenda Item III

COUNTRY COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION IN THE EUROPEAN REGION

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Last year's Commonwealth Health Ministers noted the CHOGM 2015, commitment to deliver Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and in particular SDG3: to *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.*

The *CHMM 2016 Ministerial Statement* clearly summed up the key messages, which were then communicated to the 69th World Health Assembly.

The Commonwealth countries of the European Region (Malta, Cyprus and UK) commit to address the issues identified by WHO through national and regional collaboration. We support the work of the Commonwealth Health Hub and Healthcare Business Group. Collaboration across the Commonwealth can add value in establishing sustainable health systems, effectively tackling cross border threats, reducing health inequalities and promoting Universal Health Care: We recognise the following areas for potential collaboration.

- (i) **Chronic disease prevention and management and their impact on healthcare system sustainability:**
Chronic diseases demand high cost treatment provision in terms of long hospital stays, specialized treatments and expensive medicines.

Regional cooperation can facilitate exchanges of expertise and best practices, the establishment of joint initiatives for the effective chronic disease prevention and management, and the training of healthcare professionals.
- (ii) **Health and equity issues:** The current challenges, which can be exacerbated in times of economic austerity, have immediate effects on equal opportunities in health. Joint projects and initiatives that enable equal access to health care and support vulnerable groups can be of utmost importance in eliminating health inequalities and promoting universal health coverage.
- (iii) **Patient safety and quality of care:** Countries across the world already collaborate to improve patient outcomes and share innovations for protecting their safety. The Commonwealth offers an important platform for sharing a diverse range of expertise and experiences which, could be more effectively utilized.
- (iv) **The role of digital health - using tools for better prevention, self-care and health service delivery processes:** Due attention must be given to good governance, equity, capacity building, innovation, and knowledge as well as risk identification and management. Small countries present optimum potential

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as test hubs for m-health and big data applications; creating minimum datasets accessible regionally will certainly improve patient safety and expedite the required health care delivery.

(v) **Tacking the global threat of Anti-microbial resistance (AMR):** Collaborative work among countries is essential in combating this growing danger to public health, sustainable development and economic growth. All national strategies shall be in line with WHO's Global Action Plan on AMR taking a One Health approach, and available support shall be utilized. Collaboration shall also be extended to international organisations in facing common challenges.

(vi) **Voluntary structured cooperation - Guaranteeing patients' access to new, innovative, safe, affordable and effective medicines and therapies, whilst ensuring health system sustainability; improving equity among smaller country populations and patient groups with rare diseases:**

The Valletta Declaration led by Malta, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy and open to others, will see the setting up of a technical committee to explore possible ways of voluntary cooperation, information sharing, joined up horizon scanning, price negotiation and joint procurement mechanisms. The same approach is being taken towards structured training of healthcare professionals and professional mobility for highly specialized health care.

The Commonwealth is an extremely valuable platform for working together on all of these crucial issues; we look forward to further fruitful discussion at today's meeting.