

Meeting Report

Partnership for Sustainable Health Development in Uncertain Situations

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On April 29–30, 2019, Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) hosted the 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting on Kish Island, I. R. Iran. Held under the motto, “*united together for global health*”, the meeting was organized according to principles of partnership, bringing actors across sectors and around the world together in pursuit of a common, improved global health agenda in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International collaboration on health issues is crucial, transcending political considerations. Improving health worldwide is relevant not only to SDG3 but plays a role in all SDGs and contributes to improved health worldwide.

From its outset, the World Health Summit has advocated for science to take more responsibility in facilitating a holistic approach to global health. Providing the academic foundation for these efforts is the *M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies of Medicine and Sciences*. Each year, the M8 Alliance members, holding the international presidency of the World Health Summit, host a Regional Meeting, bringing contributors from around the world together with leading local, national, and regional stakeholders and decision-makers to address local and international health issues in an environment of academic freedom.

Hosted by the oldest and preeminent medical university in Iran, the 2019 Regional Meeting was no exception, building on TUMS’ academic and medical excellence and incorporating policy expertise from ministers and other high-level officials from around the region, as well as regional and international academics and representatives from the private sector and civil society. Over 700 participants from 44 countries took part.¹

The meeting focused on six challenges to global health in the West Asian region, namely: health in uncertain situations, global health in a transitional world, non-communicable diseases and mental health, planetary health,

medical education, and sustainable health development. Over 140 speakers, 60 percent from outside Iran, contributed to 29 parallel sessions and four plenaries. The meeting brought not only medical topics—like oral health and strengthening surgical networks—to the forefront, but also other science, cultural and policy issues—from religion to environmental science. The summit also addressed the impact of sanctions on Iranian’s health.²

Current challenges to global health are complex, diverse and multidimensional. The SDGs are a response to this complexity and provide a framework for a holistic answer to the ensuing challenges. The World Health Summit’s hallmark is interdisciplinarity, non-political, and multistakeholder participation and interaction. Improving global health requires true partnership across many disciplines—including and beyond medicine, public health, biology, agriculture, nutrition, social sciences, humanity—from all countries and transcending political considerations. Diversity in participants from all parts of the world, different cultures, professions, and interest groups is essential to overcome complex health challenges.

To contribute to a vision of science without borders, 12 bilateral scientific agreements were signed at the meeting between TUMS and other universities and research centres from around the globe. The Lancet paper on Iran entitled: “*Iran in Transition*”, was also globally launched during the Regional Meeting on 29 April 2019, while the Inter-Academy Partnership launched another global document called: “*A call for action to declare trauma as a disease*” the same day.

Complementing a decade of World Health Summit gatherings in Berlin and the previous regional meetings across multiple continents, the 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting in Iran has been a unique forum to garner high-level political, civil society, academic and industry engagement in global health in the World Health Organization’s Eastern Mediterranean Region. The

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meeting reemphasized the need to move beyond political considerations and foster harmony and collaboration towards sustainable health development. Such transdisciplinary, science-based, cross-sectoral concerted efforts are necessary to set the agenda for global health for the years to come.

This approach must be continued well into the future. To train future leaders of global health, the meeting supported the establishment of the “M8-Alliance Student Network” and hosted a student pre-event, the first of its kind at a World Health Summit meeting, during which 200 students from 21 countries gathered to discuss health issues and also attended mentorship events with world-class global health experts.

We must work together to address the complexities of global health challenges. International, regional, and global partnership is the key to fulfill the requirements

of SDGs. The World Health Summit is committed to this global mission, and the 7th World Health Summit Regional meeting in Iran was another step forward towards strengthening partnerships in the region. When it comes to global health, we are all connected, as envisioned by the world famous 13th century Persian poet, Saadi Shirazi:

***“All human beings are in truth akin
All in creation share one origin
When fate allots a member pangs and pains
No ease for other members then remains.”***

References

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2. M8 Alliance Statement – Resolution of the 7th World Health Summit Regional Meeting. <https://www.worldhealthsummit.org/regional-meeting/2019-kish/results/m8-statement.html>.

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