

SECOND EUROMED MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON HEALTH
EUROMED COUNTRIES TOGETHER FOR HEALTH
Session on Communicable diseases

(14h30 – 16h00; 17 NOVEMBER 2008, EGYPT)

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SPEAKING POINTS

- Countries of the Mediterranean region face **similar patterns** of communicable diseases as well as similar risk of pandemics. We have to keep in mind that diseases and health threats do not know borders.
- Risk of outbreaks of communicable diseases, as well as other health emergencies, calls for developing the cooperation between health authorities and institutions. All countries have to be prepared to confront pandemics.
- Together with pandemics we need to devise mechanisms to tackle other communicable diseases. One example could be HIV/AIDS. Here we have to pay attention to cultural issues in designing prevention campaigns and providing treatment. Citizens must be encouraged to be tested without the fear of possible stigmas.
- This is the reason why the EU neighboring countries, including the Mediterranean partners, set this area of cooperation in their European Neighborhood Policy Action plans.
- **Almost all Mediterranean countries participate in the EpiSouth network co-financed by the European Commission. This is a**

real achievement of partners, thanks to the determination of the managing institution, which is the Institute Superiore di Sanità in Rome.

- This cooperation mechanism can be taken as an example that is **actively strengthened by partners.**
- We noted the interest of Mediterranean partners in joining other EU projects related to communicable diseases and we will try to help and to make it possible.
- One of the basic needs is to ensure **quality of data**, comparability of data and appropriate definitions of indicators and measures to reach the same level of understanding in exchange and communication.
- In this respect the European Commission, through its Public Health Directorate and with the collaboration of the European Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control, as a specialised agency, could be helpful. Currently, we are already collaborating informally with ENP partners on selective issues such as avian influenza.
- The implementation of the **International Health Regulations** is another common challenge for the EU Member States and for the neighbouring countries. The Commission remains committed to promote this process in the neighbourhood.

Word count: 379

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