



Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the WHO Alliance for the Global Elimination of Blinding Trachoma

Cairo, 2–4 April 2007



GLOBAL ELIMINATION OF BLINDING TRACHOMA BY THE YEAR 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION

The eleventh annual meeting of the WHO Alliance for the Global Elimination of Blinding Trachoma by the Year 2020 (GET 2020) was held at the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, from 2 to 4 April 2007. The meeting was attended by 85 participants, of whom 34 were national coordinators for trachoma control programmes (see Annex 1).

The opening ceremony commenced with an address from Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. Dr Ahmed Trabelsi, Regional Co-Chair, International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness/IMPACT, delivered a message from His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz Bin Ahmed Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Regional Chair for the Eastern Mediterranean International Agency for Prevention of Blindness/IMPACT. Dr Silvio Mariotti, Medical Officer, GET 2020 Secretary, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland, provided a global update on trachoma. Other speakers included: Dr Nasr El Sayed, First Under-Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population, Egypt, speaking on behalf of H.E. Dr Hatem El-Gabaly, Minister of Health and Population; Mr Mohammed Demerdash, Ministry of Housing and Utilities & Community Settlements, Egypt, speaking on behalf of Dr Ahmed Maghrabi, Minister of Housing and Utilities & Community Settlements; Dr Akef El Maghraby, Al Noor Foundation; and Dr Tabita Botros Shokai, Minister of Health, Sudan. A summary record of the opening ceremony is provided in Annex 2.

Dr M.A. Jama, WHO Deputy Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, opened the first working session of the meeting on behalf of the Regional Director. Welcoming the participants, he said that partnerships involving international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, professional groupings and academic institutions were playing an increasing role in global health and the work of WHO, and were leading to a growing investment in health in support of the priorities being set by countries. The Alliance was to be commended for the achievements of the previous decade, in which the generous donation of azithromycin by Pfizer Inc. had played a crucial role. The Alliance's successful balance of partners provided a model for others. However, trachoma continued to affect millions around the world, especially women and children in developing countries in Africa. Proven prevention measures were available, in particular the WHO-endorsed SAFE strategy, with its four integrated components, surgery (S), antibiotic treatment (A), facial cleanliness (F) and environmental improvement (E), and poverty reduction through socioeconomic development. Unfortunately, the financial resources made available to date had been unable to match the needs. The Alliance must therefore continue to advocate for the mobilization of additional funds, including those available through the new WHO approach to the elimination of neglected tropical diseases. He looked forward to the guidance to be provided by the meeting.

Dr Rachel Jose (India) was elected Chairman and Dr Nouhou Diallo (Guinea) Vice-Chairman. The Agenda was adopted (see Annex 3).

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