

RESOLUTION

OF THE

WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA

SEA/RC65/R8

COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED EFFORTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS (ASD) AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

The Regional Committee,

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007; and the Declaration of 2nd April as World Autism Awareness Day by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007; and the Dhaka Declaration on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities of July 2011; and further recalling World Health Assembly resolution WHA65.4 on The global burden of mental disorders and the need for a comprehensive, coordinated response from health and social sectors at the country level;

Reiterating commitments of safeguarding citizens from discrimination and social exclusion on the grounds of disability or other condition, and ensuring citizens' basic necessities of life, education, medical care and social security, and attention to vulnerable groups of the population;

Noting that more and more children are being detected to have autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities worldwide, and that the likelihood that still more remain unidentified in society due to lack of awareness;

Understanding that ASD and developmental disabilities are life-long and affect the functioning of the brain, and are characterized by impairments in social interaction, problems

with verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted, repetitive behaviour, interests and activities;

Further noting that such disabilities seriously influence everyday functioning of affected children, severely interfere with their developmental, educational and social attainments, and bring significant economic costs to their families and societies;

Concerned that, despite increasing evidence documenting the effectiveness of early interventions in improving the overall functioning of the child and long-term outcomes, children and families in need often have poor access to services and do not receive adequate treatment and care;

Deeply concerned about the dramatic rise in the numbers of children with autism and developmental disabilities and the growing costs involved in managing such disabilities;

Recognizing that children with ASD and developmental disabilities and their families often face major challenges associated with stigma, isolation and discrimination; and

Acknowledging that the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP 2008) of the WHO Secretariat can be particularly instrumental for developing countries if it gives increasing focus on ASD and developmental disabilities;

URGES Member States:

- (1) To give appropriate recognition to ASD and developmental disabilities in all policies and programmes related to early childhood development;
- (2) To develop and implement policies and legislation, as appropriate, and multisectoral plans including public awareness, stigma removal campaigns, supported with adequate human, financial and technical resources to address issues related to ASD and developmental disabilities;
- (3) To develop strategies for early detection and community-based interventions for children with ASD and developmental disabilities in line with WHA 65.4;
- (4) To develop appropriate infrastructure for comprehensive management, including education, care, support, intervention, services and rehabilitation, of ASD and developmental disabilities;
- (5) To provide social and psychological support and care to families affected by ASD and developmental disabilities;
- (6) To promote research on the social and public health aspects of ASD and developmental disabilities; and
- (7) To implement, as appropriate, the Dhaka Declaration on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities of 2011; and

REQUESTS The Regional Director:

- (1) To collaborate with Member States and partner agencies for support to strengthen national capacities and implement national efforts to address ASD and developmental disabilities, including early identification, management and care, at all levels of facilities and monitoring progress;
- (2) To support Member States upon request in the implementation of the Dhaka Declaration on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities of 2011;
- (3) To support the activities of autism-related networks, including the South-East Asia Autism Network (SAAN); and
- (4) To mobilize resources to address ASD and developmental disabilities in the South-East Asia Region.
- (5) To coordinate with mhGAP of the WHO Secretariat for giving increasing focus on ASD and developmental disabilities;
- (6) To submit a progress report to the Sixty-seventh session of the Regional Committee on implementation of this Resolution.

Fifth meeting, 7 September 2012