

Position Paper of United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the World Health Organization (WHO)

I. Aiding WHO to combat non-communicable disease (NCD) and increase awareness of women's health issues by establishing a regional Middle Eastern office

Since its founding, the UAE's numerous unprecedented achievements and global progress has been remarkable and its leaders have no intention of slowing down. UAE is committed to continued economic growth and industrialization, putting its oil-derived wealth into action for improving the lives of its citizens. One of the areas of commitment is health care and UAE has made strides in this area. For example, despite the high population of migrants (which currently form 85% of the UAE population¹), UAE has effectively curbed the inevitable spread of communicable disease due to improved standard of living, the quality and availability of health care, and population-based control measures such as immunization, screening, and treatment.² However, like the rest of the world, the cost of the modern, urbanized lifestyle is an increase in non-communicable disease (NCD), making cardiovascular disease and cancer the leading causes of death in UAE and the world.³ UAE agrees with and wishes to aid the WHO with its goal of calling global attention to NCD's and working towards its eradication.

UAE proposals and call to action: the UAE would like to propose the establishment of a new WHO regional office in the UAE to serve the Middle East and specifically, Islamic countries with their unique cultural needs, history, and beliefs. There are several reasons why this proposal makes sense:

- Currently, UAE and other regional countries are served by the WHO regional office in Egypt, which serves the Eastern Mediterranean.⁴ But given the recent unrest in Egypt, it is sadly no longer a hub for international travel, commerce or policy making. On the other hand, the UAE is uniquely positioned in the Arab world and the Middle East in that it is already an established hub for international travel, with more international passengers (69 million) passing through Dubai airport in the 12 months than Heathrow.⁵
- UAE has well established universities and institutions for the study and implementation of public health. There are 40 hospitals and medical centers in Abu Dhabi, 37 in Dubai and another 60 in the other Emirate states,⁶ including Dubai Healthcare City, a 4 million square foot campus with more than 100 specialty clinics and medical centers, boasting the highest concentration compared to anywhere in the region.⁷
- UAE has strong partnerships with world-class medical centers including Johns Hopkins Hospital, Cleveland Clinic, The New England Center for Children, and the Mayo Clinic. With such established relationships, the UAE is uniquely positioned to be able to carry out research specific to the region and measuring the success of proposed protocols.
- UAE has an impressive record for championing women's issues in the region, including their health. As spoken by our Minister for Foreign Trade (and former Minister of Economic and Planning), Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, "... the true progress of a society or a nation can be determined by the way it treats women. Progressive thinking and economic prosperity are meaningless unless women are given the respect and honor they deserve; women should always be considered equal to their male

¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Arab_Emirates>

² Tom Loney, et al., "An analysis of the health status of the United Arab Emirates: the 'Big 4' public health issues", *Glob Health Action* 2013, 6: 20100. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/gha.v6i0.20100>>

³ United Arab Emirates, World Health Organization - Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD) Country Profiles, 2014. <http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/are_en.pdf?ua=1>

⁴ "About WHO, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean". <<http://www.who.int/about/regions/emro/en/>>

⁵ Jolyon Attwooll, "The incredible rise of Dubai as the world's air travel hub", *The Telegraph*, 6 JANUARY 2015. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/middle-east/united-arab-emirates/dubai/articles/The-incredible-rise-of-Dubai-as-the-worlds-air-travel-hub/>>

⁶ "List of hospitals in the United Arab Emirates", Wikipedia, last modified on 2 November 2016. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hospitals_in_the_United_Arab_Emirates>

⁷ <<http://www.patientsbeyondborders.com/united-arab-emirates-uae>>

counterparts.”⁸ This is another area where the UAE is setting a strong example for regional countries. Today, in UAE, women have proved their worth in every domain, be it medicine, engineering, media, sports, finance, or politics. Since the health and wellbeing of women is one of WHO’s primary goals, as set in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),⁹ the UAE can provide regional help with this WHO goal. This is especially important to our government because for too long, the religion of Islam has been unfairly seen to promote inequality between men and women and the UAE, as a primarily Islamic government, wishes to dispel this myth and show its commitment to women.

- Most importantly, UAE is committed to make healthcare one of its top priority goals. One of the goals of UAE’s Vision 2021, the highest-level government strategic plan, is to achieve “world-class healthcare.”¹⁰ It aims to do so by accrediting its hospitals according to national and international standards. The 2021 Vision also seeks to reduce the prevalence of diabetes, obesity, and smoking among the population as well as decrease the number of deaths from cardiovascular diseases and cancer. In keeping with this vision, the various Emirates have developed various strategies to improve healthcare, including an 85 initiative strategic plan for Abu Dhabi¹¹ and a 12-year plan to reshape Dubai’s healthcare system, including a 3 billion hospital revamp and the establishment of 40 new primary healthcare centers, medical colleges, nursing schools and hospitals.¹²

CONCLUSION: The major public health challenges posed by modern lifestyle, occupational, and environmental factors leading to the development of chronic diseases are not isolated to the UAE; rather, they form part of a global health problem, which requires international collaboration and action. UAE’s health care goals align with those of WHO as summarized by this quote from the UAE President, Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan: “Human capital is the real wealth of this country, before and after oil...Serving the interests of citizens is the goal that we strive for every day. Building human resources is central to comprehensive social and economic development.”¹³ The UAE government proposes to assist the WHO in furthering its global mission by increasing the WHO presence in the region and providing vital infrastructure and support.

⁸ “UAE National Day: 13 Powerful quotes from UAE’s innovative leaders”, Dec. 2014. <<http://www.elanthemag.com/uae-national-day-12-powerful-quotes-uaes-innovative-leaders/>>

⁹ MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women. WHO. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 June 2016.

¹⁰ “The UAE Healthcare Sector: An Update”, The US-UAE Business Council, September 2016. <usauebusiness.org/wp-content/uploads/.../Healthcare-Report-Final.pdf>

¹¹ <<http://www.thenational.ae/uae/health/man-in-charge-of-dha-wants-speed-of-progress-accelerated>>

¹² <<http://www.thenational.ae/uae/health/dubai-unveils-ambitious-10-year-healthcare-plan>>

¹³ “UAE National Day: 13 Powerful quotes from UAE’s innovative leaders”, Dec. 2014. <<http://www.elanthemag.com/uae-national-day-12-powerful-quotes-uaes-innovative-leaders/>>