HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

The Regional Committee,

Mindful that a health system consists of all organizations, people and actions whose primary intent is to promote, restore or maintain health from households to hospitals, and including public and private providers, and that health care and services include personal, private and public health services, curative, promotive and preventive, as well as efforts to influence determinants of health;

Recognizing that strong health systems are the foundation that underpins the ability of all health programmes to deliver better results;

Acknowledging the need to strengthen health systems as an effective means to accelerate the achievement of global health goals and improve health outcomes for all, especially in developing countries;

Affirming the importance of the vision of universal access to quality health services for achieving improved health outcomes for all;

Considering that 2008 marks the 30th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata and that the WHO Director-General has called for the revitalization of primary health care;
Reaffirming that primary health care, including the values of equity and universal access, as well as community participation and multisectoral action on determinants of health, forms the guiding principle for efforts to strengthen health systems;

Noting that the WHO Secretariat document Everybody's Business: Strengthening Health Systems to Improve Health Outcomes provides a useful framework for holistic and coordinated actions, as well as attention to important cross-cutting issues such as equity, quality, gender and human rights;

Noting further that the Strategic Plan for Strengthening Health Systems in the Western Pacific Region provides an appropriate and useful framework to guide current work in the Region on health systems strengthening;

Recalling also that the existing strategies in the area of health systems strengthening, namely, the Regional Strategy for Improving Access to Essential Medicines in the Western Pacific Region (2005-2010), the Strategy on Health Care Financing for Countries of the Western Pacific and South-East Asia Regions (2006-2010), the Regional Strategy on Human Resources for Health (2006–2015) and the Regional Strategy for Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific, are consistent with the Strategic Plan for Strengthening Health Systems in the Western Pacific Region;

Noting further that evaluations of the implementation of these strategies are ongoing,

1. REAFFIRMS its commitment to the vision of universal access to quality services for improved health outcomes for all;
2. URGES Member States:

(1) to take urgent action to further strengthen their health systems in response to the health needs of their populations, especially the poor and other vulnerable and socially excluded groups, based on the values and principles of primary health care as their guiding framework;

(2) to collaborate in efforts to increase the capacity in the Region to analyse country-specific health systems issues and challenges and assess health systems performance through a mechanism such as an Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies;

(3) to improve health outcomes by, among other things, making significant progress towards achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals and the universal goal of “health for all”;

3. REQUESTS the Regional Director:

(1) to accelerate support to Member States in their efforts to develop and implement their strategies for health systems strengthening and primary health care thereby achieving improved health outcomes for their people, especially those who are poor or otherwise most vulnerable;

(2) to increase capacity within the Western Pacific Region to provide technical assistance to Member States in health systems strengthening based on primary health care principles, building on the Strategic Plan for Strengthening Health Systems in the Western Pacific Region;

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(3) to align the programmes of WHO within Member States, to the fullest extent possible, to be consistent with national health plans thereby moving towards greater compliance with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness;

(4) to increase capacity in the Region to provide technical assistance to Member States on analysing country-specific health systems challenges and developing methods to assess the performance of their health systems, through a mechanism such as an Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, in collaboration with national and international partners;

(5) to develop, through a process of consultation with Member States, a regional strategy for strengthening health systems, based on the guiding principles and core values of primary health care and informed by the outcomes of the ongoing and midterm reviews of the implementation of existing strategies and other related technical work, and present this Strategy in a high-level meeting in 2010 as well as to the Regional Committee in 2010.