2. Policy development – Antimicrobial resistance: adopting shared priorities for action across the Region

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a serious threat to global public health that places the lives and the well-being of the people in the Region at risk. Due in part to the irrational use of antibiotics, many microorganisms, including bacteria, have grown resistant to antimicrobial drugs – rendering ineffective some established drug treatments.

AMR has the potential to damage trade and economies as the disease burden increases, the cost of health care rises and efforts to control infectious diseases are hampered.

The Action Agenda for Antimicrobial Resistance in the Western Pacific Region was endorsed by the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific in October 2014. The agenda calls for development of comprehensive national plans, awareness raising, improved surveillance and monitoring of antimicrobial use, and strengthened health system capacity. The agenda also includes key indicators for the containment of AMR.

Significant advances have been made in the development of national plans. Viet Nam approved its National Action Plan for Antimicrobial Resistance (2013–2020), and Cambodia developed a National Policy to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance and a National Strategy to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance (2015–2017). In the Philippines, Administrative Order No. 42 was signed by the president, mandating

the creation of an interagency committee to finalize the national AMR action plan.

A high-level meeting on AMR was also held in Viet Nam in June 2015. The meeting concluded with the signing of an aide memoire on AMR among representatives of Viet Nam’s ministries of Health, Agriculture and Rural Development, Industry and Trade, and Natural Resources and Environment, along with embassies of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Viet Nam and the United States of America in Viet Nam, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and WHO.

Hong Kong SAR (China) and the Philippines have adapted the WHO pledge to use antibiotics responsibly in national advocacy campaigns. In the Pacific, 57 health workers completed an online antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) course through the Pacific Open Learning Health Net.

A training-of-trainers workshop on AMS in hospitals was held in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the Philippines in March 2015. Promotion of rational drug use is important in Member States like these where antibiotics and other medicines are widely available over-the-counter.

Without urgent coordinated action, the world may face a post-antibiotic era in which once-effective drugs no longer work. AMR threatens to turn common infections and minor injuries into killers once again.

To increase awareness, WHO will promote a regional antibiotic awareness week in November 2015 and expand AMS training face-to-face and online.