2. Using regulation to strengthen cooperation and convergence for medicines and health workforce

Regulation is a key element of good governance in the health sector. The capacity of national regulatory systems in the Western Pacific Region varies extensively, contributing to inequalities in the quality and safety of health services across the Region. To address this, the WHO Regional Committee endorsed in October 2017 the Western Pacific Regional Action Agenda on Regulatory Strengthening, Convergence and Cooperation for Medicines and the Health Workforce.

The action agenda guides countries in strengthening their national regulatory systems by adopting a stepwise approach that is backed by legal frameworks and based on country development context and needs. In addition, the action agenda provides a framework for convergence and cooperation to support less-resourced regulatory authorities and to enable countries to cooperate when regulatory processes must be aligned to tackle public health emergencies or address unsafe products and practices across borders.

WHO supports national regulatory authorities to develop and implement regulatory functions along the life cycle of medical products and to strengthen the health workforce. The pillars of support include: development of legislative frameworks that clearly articulate regulatory mandates and roles; a stepwise approach to regulatory strengthening; adoption of mechanisms for transparent, accountable and consistent decision-making in regulatory processes; the use of existing tools to evaluate the effectiveness of regulations; and participation in convergence and cooperation mechanisms as a way to strengthen their own regulatory systems.