



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**

A DECADE OF ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

THIRD HEALTH MINISTERS' FORUM

With the special participation of policy-makers from other government sectors and representatives of RCC initiatives and partners

HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE:

A SHARED GOAL AND RESPONSIBILITY

Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 13–14 October 2011

THE BANJA LUKA PLEDGE

We, the Ministers of Health of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina¹, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, member countries of the South-eastern Europe Health Network (hereinafter referred to as the SEE Health Network), have gathered at our Third Health Ministers' Forum: *Health in All Policies in South-eastern Europe: A Shared Goal and Responsibility*, commemorating a decade of regional cooperation in public health in SEE, in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 13 and 14 October 2011 to discuss the progress made in the past ten years and to consider future regional cooperation in public health in SEE.

WE, THE MINISTERS,

Recalling that the SEE Health Network has been developing regional cooperation and technical activities in public health in South-eastern Europe for the past ten years and that this regional cooperation in public health was formalized with the commitment of all the ministers of health of the SEE member countries to the Dubrovnik and Skopje Pledges, endorsed at the First Health Ministers' Forum in 2001 and the Second Health Ministers' Forum in 2005, respectively;

Recalling that regional cooperation in public health remains of the highest priority to support political cooperation and economic development in the SEE region, to facilitate confidence-building and to support the European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes;

Recognizing that the SEE Health Network has had to adapt to recent political changes and emerging new entities, including:

- the signature of a memorandum of understanding between the SEE Health Network and the Regional Cooperation Council in 2010, to frame, take forward and partner cooperation in health with political, economic and other health-related initiatives in South-eastern Europe, and
- the accession to membership of the European Union by two SEE Health Network members (Bulgaria and Romania), following which the European Union has supported the SEE Health Network, emphasizing public health as a tool for economic and human development;

Recognizing the commitments in the Memorandum of Understanding on the Future of the South-eastern Europe Health Network in the Framework of the South-East European Cooperation Process, signed in 2009, and the Agreement among the Member States of the South-eastern Europe Health Network on the Host Country Arrangements concerning the seat of the Secretariat of the Network, signed in 2010;

Recognizing and fully acknowledging the importance of the continuing efforts by the European international community to provide political, technical and financial support and human resources to the SEE Health Network, especially the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe and the Regional Cooperation Council, as well as a number of European countries, and in particular Belgium, Greece, France, Hungary, Italy, Israel, Norway, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden and the United Kingdom;

¹ Minister of Civil Affairs on the behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina's health authorities: Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Federal Ministry of Health, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Republic of Srpska and Department of Health and Other Services of Brčko District

WE, THE MINISTERS, ACKNOWLEDGE THE MOMENTUM BUILT UP

Accordingly we recognize that this Third Health Ministers' Forum is taking place at a time of many contemporary developments and needs, in particular:

- to further the strong regional cooperation in public health in South-eastern Europe, building on the achievements of a decade of regional cooperation (2001–2011);
- to work towards achieving equity and accountability in health, thus building on major European resolutions, charters and communications, treaties, frameworks and action plans as well as the new European health policy (Health 2020); and
- to give effect to global and European policies and action plans for strengthening public health capacities and services for the control and prevention of noncommunicable diseases.

WE, THE MINISTERS, UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVE TO WORK TOWARDS:

I. Sustaining and strengthening regional cooperation in public health in South-eastern Europe by:

1. Continuing cooperation beyond 2011 on the initiative: “Health development action for South-eastern Europe: The South-eastern Europe Health Network” and by doing so to coordinate and maintain regional cooperation in public health in order to further reforms of the health systems in the SEE Health Network member countries and thus contribute to economic and social development in the twenty-first century;
2. Building up existing institutional, human and knowledge resources in the South-eastern European region and continuing to support the SEE Health Network as a viable, self-reliant mechanism capable of serving the goals endorsed by the ministers of health of South-eastern European countries in this Banja Luka Pledge;
3. Further consolidating the SEE Health Network alliance in public health;
4. Promoting and providing for membership and partnership of other countries, as appropriate, according to the statutes of the SEE Health Network;
5. Adhering to those principles on which regional cooperation in South-eastern Europe has been based since 2001: regional ownership; partnership; transparency and accountability; complementarity; sustainability; the equal and active involvement of all SEE member countries; distribution of activities and resources based on country needs assessments; decentralization of activities and resources; and efficiency;
6. Fully implementing the obligations of member countries as prescribed in the signed documents of the SEE Health Network;

II. Achieving equity and accountability in health by:

1. Committing our Governments to work towards the goals of Health in All Policies (HiAP) within our countries, across the SEE Health Network and in the WHO European Region;
 2. Advancing implementation of the HiAP approach, thereby ensuring that health and health equity are considered in all policy and investment decisions at local and national levels;
 3. Strengthening the routine mechanisms that engage local communities, nongovernmental organizations and other stakeholders as partners in identifying solutions for improving health and reducing health inequalities;
 4. Strengthening capacity for and technical cooperation in implementing health and health equity in all policies;
 5. Supporting and facilitating the development of strong high-level policy processes across the different sectors for dealing with the social determinants of health and implementing the HiAP approach in all member countries;
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III. Strengthening public health capacities and services for control and prevention of noncommunicable diseases by:

1. Accepting, adhering to and implementing at national levels the vision, values, principles, strategies and actions of the European health policy Health 2020, the European action framework for strengthening public health capacities and services, and the European action plan for preventing noncommunicable diseases;
2. Committing ourselves to securing and expanding universal, individual and population-based preventive and health-promoting services for all our populations;
3. Developing and implementing national action plans for controlling and preventing noncommunicable diseases;
4. Increasing sustainability and country capacity by strengthening health systems and human resources;
5. Endorsing and implementing country and regional strategies for the sustainable development of human resources in health in South-eastern Europe;
6. Fostering and sustaining collaboration with research institutions, training schools, educational centres, universities and partners' health care settings , to ensure full utilization of knowledge and experience in the fields of public health and health care;

IV. Working more closely with our partners to upgrade and make best use of their unprecedented support by:

1. Ensuring coherence with partners' visions, missions, policies and acts;
2. Securing unanimous agreements on joint actions;
3. Working in the context of regionally led plans;
4. Ensuring the greatest possible coordination and complementarity of our resources with those of our partners, to reduce fragmentation.

WE, THE MINISTERS,

Acknowledging the need for Europe-wide development of public health, CALL ON:

National governments in the WHO European Region to:

1. Recognize the importance of regional cooperation in health in South-eastern Europe as a significant contributor to both national and international strategies in public health in Europe;
2. Examine ways in which additional resources could be made available in support of public health action in South-eastern Europe, in partnership with the SEE Health Network, for the sustainable development of this regional cooperation process in public health; and
3. Support the SEE Health Network in its coordinating and capacity-building role.

We look to the partner organizations to:

1. Provide leadership and strategic support in working towards attainment of the goals of the Banja Luka Pledge;
 2. Provide technical support and guidance for better integrated public health planning, evaluation and monitoring in South-eastern Europe;
 3. Promote and encourage the development of South-eastern European regional action components in all their technical areas of work; and
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4. Partner the SEE Health Network in promoting synergy between sectors and settings, harmonizing skills and experience at national and regional levels with the aim of achieving better public health.

We are convinced that our combined efforts at national, regional (South-eastern European) and European levels will bring about changes that will substantially improve the health and well-being of all our citizens.

Done in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 14 October 2011
