

WHO and Armenia agree on health priorities during Regional Director's visit



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WHO Regional Director for Europe, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, signed a biennial collaborative agreement (BCA) and presented a special WHO award to health workers in Armenia during a recent country visit.

The BCA signed by Ms Anahit Avanesyan, Minister of Health of Armenia and Dr Kluge focuses on quality health care accessible to everyone, effective protection against health emergencies, and healthy communities as contributors to an economy of well-being – helping shape cooperation between the country and WHO/Europe for the next 2 years.

“Health is a human right, and in its own right is a key contributor to a flourishing economy, peace and security. Today, the Government of Armenia and WHO are putting health at the top of the country’s agenda, by signing a biennial collaborative agreement for 2022–2023,” said Dr Kluge.

“Armenia spearheads several national and regional health projects, with a focus on tobacco control, mental health, emergency preparedness and community resilience – to mention a few. This year, the establishment of a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre and an Armenian Emergency Response Medical Team, as well as the forthcoming global Emergency Medical Teams’ Meeting in October, hosted by your government, all speak to the Armenian authorities’ strong, timely commitment to health,” he added.

Dr Kluge also discussed the country’s health agenda and commitment to reforms with His Excellency Vahagn Khachaturyan, President of the Republic of Armenia, His Excellency Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia, and the Honourable Alen Simonyan, President of the National Assembly.

The BCA builds on the key achievements made within the 3-decade long partnership between WHO and the Government of Armenia. It is in line with international public health strategic goals and frameworks such as the WHO European Programme of Work and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

During a visit to a vaccination clinic at the Surb Grigor Lusavorich Medical Centre, Dr Kluge was accompanied by representatives of the international partners involved in health, including the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Armenia, representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator. Speaking with EU Ambassador Andrea Wiktorin, Dr Kluge heard about the successful cooperation between the EU Delegation and WHO within the frame of COVID-19 response activities, which will continue and expand beyond COVID-19.

Dr Kluge spoke with health workers and parents of some of Armenia's youngest citizens, who came for their scheduled routine vaccination – protecting against a range of vaccine-preventable diseases including polio, measles and rubella. He also spent time with older citizens receiving COVID-19 vaccine booster doses.

Recognizing the continued dedication and commitment of health and care workers to improve the health and well-being of people in Armenia and across the WHO European Region, Dr Kluge officially handed over the International Year of Health and Care Workers Award 2021 to Ms Avanesyan and through her to all health workers in Armenia.

Dr Kluge highlighted that the award is a token of appreciation and gratitude for the unwavering dedication of health and care workers, including in response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 2 years. He emphasized the urgent need to invest more in health workers for shared dividends in health, jobs, economic development and equity.

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