



Photo: Two doctors are shown in consultation at Kabul's tuberculosis hospital, Afghanistan, in 2009. Due to AMR, tuberculosis is becoming increasingly untreatable. Photo: UN Photo/Fardin Waezi

28.9.2016 - Last week world leaders signaled an unprecedented level of attention to curb the spread of infections that are resistant to antimicrobial medicines.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) happens when bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi develop resistance against medicines that were previously able to cure them. High levels of AMR are already seen in the world today as a result of overuse and misuse of antibiotics and other antimicrobials in humans, animals (including farmed fish), and crops, as well as the spread of residues of these medicines in soil, crops and water.

In the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) European Region](#) , the resistance of some pathogens now reaches over 50% in some countries, and new resistant mechanisms are emerging and spreading rapidly. In Norway and Iceland, for example, 400,000 resistant infections are estimated to occur every year, leading to about 25,000 deaths, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Left unchecked, AMR is predicted to have significant social, health security, and economic repercussions that will seriously undermine the development of countries; it endangers achievement of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Common and life-threatening infections like pneumonia, gonorrhoea, and post-operative infections, as well as HIV, tuberculosis and malaria are increasingly becoming untreatable because of AMR.

For the first time, Heads of State [committed](#) to taking a broad, coordinated approach to address the root causes of AMR across multiple sectors, especially human health, animal health and agriculture. This is only the fourth time a health issue has been taken up by the UN General Assembly (the others were HIV, non-communicable diseases, and Ebola).

Countries reaffirmed their commitment to develop national action plans on AMR, based on the [Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance](#) — the blueprint for tackling AMR developed in 2015 by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) in coordination with the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#) (FAO) and the [World Organisation for Animal Health](#) (OIE). Such plans are needed to understand the full scale of the problem and stop the misuse of antimicrobial medicines in human health, animal health and agriculture.

Leaders pledged to strengthen regulation of antimicrobials, improve knowledge and awareness, and promote best practices. They called for better use of existing, cost-effective tools for preventing infections in humans and animals. These include immunisation, safe water and sanitation, and good hygiene in hospitals and animal husbandry.

WHO recommends we all take measures such as good hygiene (especially hand washing), surveillance and vaccination to prevent health-care-associated infections.



~~Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 29 September 2016. World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) Director, Dr. Hanan Hamdan, speaking at a press conference during the launch of the WHO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (GAR) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 29 September 2016.~~