Health Diplomacy: A bridge to Peace and Development

High-level Hybrid Policy Dialogue and Seminar

Health Diplomacy Research Center
Iran University of Medical Sciences
in collaboration with World Health Organization
Tehran- Islamic Republic of Iran
16- 17 December 2026
Concept Note

Introduction

Health and well-being are increasingly recognized as both outcomes and drivers of sustainable development, social stability and human security. In an interconnected world, health challenges such as pandemics, humanitarian emergencies, population displacement, climate-related risks, noncommunicable diseases and health inequities transcend national borders and require collective action among countries and partners.

Health diplomacy refers to the processes through which governments, international organizations, academia, development partners and other stakeholders engage and cooperate on health-related issues that extend beyond the health sector. It provides an important mechanism for strengthening multilateral cooperation, advancing evidence-informed policymaking, promoting policy coherence across sectors and fostering trust among countries and institutions. Through health diplomacy, countries can work together to address common health challenges, strengthen preparedness and response capacities, and promote equitable access to essential health services and technologies.

The relevance of health diplomacy has become increasingly evident in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the critical importance of international cooperation, information-sharing, coordinated response mechanisms and equitable access to health technologies. Likewise, ongoing humanitarian and public health emergencies, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, have underscored the importance of collaborative

approaches that protect access to essential health services, strengthen health system resilience and support vulnerable populations. At the same time, countries continue to pursue Universal Health Coverage (UHC), strengthen health security and address the social determinants of health through multisectoral action and sustained political commitment.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region faces unique opportunities and challenges in this regard. The Region includes countries at different levels of socioeconomic development and health system capacity, while also experiencing a significant burden of humanitarian crises, displacement and public health emergencies. These realities reinforce the need for stronger regional collaboration, solidarity and knowledge exchange. Health diplomacy provides a constructive platform through which countries and partners can share experiences, identify common priorities and strengthen cooperation around UHC, health security, and other health related Sustainable development goals.

Against this background, the Health Diplomacy Research Center at Iran University of Medical Sciences, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, is organizing a two-day High-Level Hybrid Policy Dialogue and Seminar entitled “Health Diplomacy: A Bridge to Peace and Development.”

The seminar will serve as a technical, non-political platform focused on evidence, practical mechanisms, country experiences and policy dialogue. It will examine how health diplomacy can contribute to more resilient and equitable health systems, improved health outcomes, enhanced regional cooperation and sustainable development.

The seminar is closely aligned with the WHO Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW14), 2025-2028, which emphasizes partnerships, multilateral cooperation, resilient health systems and collective action to address increasingly complex health challenges in an interconnected world. Health diplomacy provides a practical mechanism for advancing these priorities by facilitating dialogue, negotiation and collaboration among governments, international organizations, academia and development partners. The seminar also supports WHO's growing emphasis on the relationship between health and peace by highlighting how health cooperation can serve as a bridge for dialogue, trust-building and regional solidarity, particularly in settings affected by emergencies.

The seminar will convene senior policymakers, representatives of international organizations, United Nations agencies, academia and development partners from the Eastern Mediterranean Region and beyond. It will provide a unique opportunity to exchange experiences, share evidence and lessons learned, and explore practical ways in which health diplomacy can strengthen health cooperation, promote regional solidarity and support collective action to address common health challenges.

Objectives

The seminar aims to:

1. **Provide a platform for high-level policy dialogue and knowledge exchange** on the role of health diplomacy in advancing the dual goals of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and health security, with a focus on practical country experiences and evidence-informed approaches.
2. **Promote regional collaboration and multilateral cooperation** among Member States, international organizations, academia and development partners to address shared health challenges and identify opportunities for collective action.
3. **Strengthen understanding of how health diplomacy can support the implementation of global and regional health commitments**, including those related to Universal Health Coverage, health security, the International Health Regulations (2005), the WHO Pandemic Agreement, health equity and resilient health systems.

Expected Outcomes

The seminar is expected to achieve the following outcomes:

1. **Development of a concise set of evidence-informed policy recommendations** for Member States and relevant regional cooperation mechanisms on leveraging health diplomacy to advance Universal Health Coverage and health security.
2. **Establishment of a regional platform, network or community of practice** on health diplomacy to facilitate the continued exchange of knowledge, experiences and technical expertise among Member States, international organizations, development partners, academia and civil society organizations, thereby supporting sustained collaboration beyond the seminar.
3. **Preparation of a seminar report and policy brief** capturing key messages, country experiences, recommendations and opportunities for future collaboration.

Modality of Implementation

The seminar will be conducted over two days in a hybrid format, combining in-person and virtual participation to ensure broad regional engagement and accessibility.

The in-person component will take place in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, while virtual participation will be facilitated through an online platform. Participation will be by invitation.

The working language of the seminar will be English. Interpretation services will also be provided to facilitate participation by a diverse regional audience.

As part of the seminar, complementary knowledge-sharing activities, including Photo exhibitions, may be organized to showcase research, innovative practices and experiences related to health diplomacy and health cooperation. Appropriate review mechanisms will be established to ensure that all materials remain technical, evidence-based and fully consistent with the objectives of the event.

Contact Information

For further information regarding the seminar, registration procedures and logistical arrangements, please contact:

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