

RD's Address

Regional Workshop on Patient Safety

“Striving for Zero Avoidable Harm, IPC, and Quality of Care, and Alignment with National Health Policy-Strategy”

1 – 2 May 2025, Virtual

Esteemed Delegates,

Partners, Colleagues, and Friends,

I am pleased to welcome you all to this Regional Workshop on Patient Safety. This discussions over the next two days will be about “*Striving for Zero Avoidable Harm, IPC and Quality of Care, and Alignment with National Health Policy and Strategy.*”

Patient safety is not just a technical agenda — it is a moral imperative. It is at the very heart of quality health services, and is fundamental to achieving Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is also critical for earning and maintaining the trust of our communities.

While much progress has been made, patient harm remains a significant cause of mortality and disability worldwide.

According to the Global Burden of Disease study, poor quality or unsafe care is responsible for nearly 5 million deaths annually in low- and middle-income countries. Many of these deaths are preventable.

In our South-East Asia Region, an estimated 2.5 million lives are lost every year due to unsafe or substandard care. If these avoidable deaths were considered to be of a single cause, it would rank among the top 10 causes of death globally.

Beyond the tragic and devastating human cost, unsafe care imposes an enormous economic burden. It is estimated to slow global growth by 0.7% annually, resulting in trillions of dollars of indirect losses each year.

But behind every statistic is a patient, a family, and a community — each placing their trust in our health systems. That trust must be honored with care that is safe, effective, and respectful.

To address this challenge, we have adopted three frameworks:

- the Regional strategy for patient safety in the WHO South-East Asia Region (2016-2025)
- the Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030; and
- the Global IPC Strategy.

These offer our Member States a clear roadmap to eliminate avoidable harm and build resilient, high-quality health systems.

I am pleased that our region has taken commendable steps, including implementing national strategies, policies, and capacity-building initiatives.

We have recently launched a Compendium of Best Practices, showcasing successful experiences from our Member States and others in similar settings. These stories not only inspire, but are also a foundation for bilateral and multilateral collaboration.

It is now time for us to renew our commitment to fully integrate patient safety and IPC into national health policies and strategies, and to align them with our broader goals under GPW13 and GPW14.

This meeting is part of a continuing journey, building on the momentum of global and regional dialogues, all of which advance the implementation of WHO strategies and pave the way to UHC.

My thanks to each of you — our national focal points, regional experts, development partners, and WHO colleagues — for your commitment to patient safety.

I know that your presence here helps us make “Zero Avoidable Harm” not just a goal, but a lived reality.

Together, let us make that future possible.

Thank you.