Regional priorities and major policy and implementation issues

Reports were provided by the regional offices for the Americas, Europe and the Western Pacific. All 3 regions have aligned their priorities to the WHO-UNICEF Global Immunization Vision and Strategy framework and are in the process of strengthening countries' surveillance capacities.

Region of the Americas

In the Region of the Americas, the strategic vision includes the following: implement strategies to achieve 95% coverage of all vaccines in every district; eliminate rubella and congenital rubella syndrome by 2010; achieve broader protection of vaccine-preventable diseases by transitioning from the immunization of children to the immunization of families; support and promote disease reduction targets by introducing rotavirus, pneumococcal, seasonal influenza and human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines when appropriate; implement plans to strengthen national capacity for evidence-based decision-making in the context of introducing new and underutilized vaccines, and provide additional support for in-depth economic studies; expand the legislative and fiscal approaches for sustaining immunization programmes while introducing new vaccines; and promote expanded participation in the revolving fund. The revolving fund needs an increase in capital and is faced with a widening gap, which it is estimated will reach approximately US$ 40 million by 2012. The Region of the Americas is mobilizing financial resources to close this gap. With respect to eliminating rubella and congenital rubella syndrome, the regional office expects that the elimination target will be achieved before 2010.

It was acknowledged that much remains to be done to increase immunization coverage and that 1 out of 3 children still live in high-risk poorly performing districts where vaccine coverage is <80%.

Introducing HPV vaccine is a priority in the Caribbean, where the burden of cervical cancer is one of the highest in the world.

The introduction of rotavirus vaccine is under way: 8 countries introduced the vaccine in 2006. So far, no increase in intussusception has been detected through post-marketing surveillance, but surveillance needs to be strengthened. The Regional Office for the Americas plans to document the lessons learnt from introducing rotavirus vaccine in order to help other countries and regions. Of particular concern is the large increase needed in cold-chain capacity.