

THE ISLAMIC ADVISORY GROUP

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER, ISSUE 16, JUNE 2020



WHO, OIC, IAG form working group to enhance cooperation



Dr Al-Mandhari (top right) and Ambassador Mussinov (top left) agreed to expand collaboration.

The IAG facilitated a virtual consultation between the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), one of its four founding partners, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Its objective was to enhance cooperation between the organizations on the immediate challenge of mobilizing resources to support Member States to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, mitigate its socioeconomic implications and strategize their long-term cooperation on other priority public health issues.

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, reaffirmed WHO's commitment to working with the OIC to support Member States in dealing with COVID-19 challenges, citing the provision of test kits, personal protective equipment (PPE) and other medical supplies to Member States, especially to lower income countries.

He stressed that while countries continued to fight the pandemic, basic health services should not be neglected.

Ambassador Askar Mussinov,

Assistant OIC Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology, highlighted the efforts of the OIC and its relevant institutions in addressing the challenges of COVID-19, including providing financial aid and medical supplies to Member States.

He reaffirmed OIC's full confidence in WHO's leadership and its efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WHO and OIC agreed to form a working group, coordinated by the IAG, to advise on an immediate plan of action and strategize long-term cooperation.

The immediate focus will be on strengthening the ongoing exchange of epidemiological and clinical research data on COVID-19.

The WHO and OIC will work together to support Member States in the prequalification of firms involved in the production of medical supplies.

The OIC will support the World Health Assembly resolution on fair and equitable access to the procurement of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The two organizations will cooperate on developing and disseminating risk

communication materials and effective messaging to debunk myths and misinformation about COVID-19 and other health issues.

The WHO and the OIC have been consulting on matters of common interest for their Member States and global health, exchanging information and knowledge and coordinating the execution of relevant programmes since the signing of their agreement for cooperation in 1982.

The WHO/EMRO has been working closely with the OIC in line with WHO's regional Vision 2023 and OIC's Strategic Health Programme of Action (SHPA) 2014-2023 to ensure that everyone in the Region can enjoy a better quality of life.

The partnership of WHO and the OIC with the IAG, since its establishment in 2013, has strengthened support to Member States on polio, immunization, maternal and child health and other public health priorities.

About the IAG

The Islamic Advisory Group (IAG) was launched in 2013 after consultations between Al Azhar Al Sharif, the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) who make up the core membership of the group along with other religious scholars, technical experts and academics. It aims to align correct religious teachings with technical information on priority health issues and communicate that to concerned communities by leveraging local religious scholars.

IAG secretariat

[facebook.com/
IslamicAdvisoryGroup](https://www.facebook.com/IslamicAdvisoryGroup)

[twitter.com/
IslamicAdvisory](https://twitter.com/IslamicAdvisory)

secretariat@lag-group.org
www.lag-group.org

WHO, IsDB, IAG boost collaboration on COVID-19, health priorities



WHO and IsDB agreed to align collaboration with emerging global health priorities.

The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and WHO agreed to boost their collaboration on the COVID-19 response and strengthen health systems of Member States to respond to other health services during the pandemic.

During a virtual consultation facilitated by the IAG, Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director, said that major gaps in health preparedness during the pandemic had highlighted the fragility of health systems in many countries of the region.

He underlined WHO's continued efforts to

support continuity of essential health services that were being affected by the focus on COVID-19 response efforts.

Amadou Thierno Diallo, acting Director-General of Global Practices, outlined the IsDB's strategy in responding to urgent health needs of Member States, including building resilient health systems and mitigating the socioeconomic implications of the pandemic.

The IsDB Group has allocated US\$ 2.3 billion to Strategic Preparedness and Response Programme for the COVID-19 response in its

57 Member States.

Diallo highlighted current challenges related to limited testing and surveillance capacities, reliability of tests, shortage of PPE and laboratory equipment, limited capacities of health systems and the need for evidence-based assessments.

The IsDB and WHO agreed to review their memorandum of understanding, signed in 1978, to align with global health priorities.

They agreed to work with Member States in conducting more evidence-based need assessments to better

identify gaps, realistic cost estimation and budget allocation.

They will cooperate on strengthening health systems in Member States to respond to other priority health services, including maternal and child health, HIV and polio.

WHO will provide technical guidance on procuring medical supplies, including testing kits, PPE and lab equipment, for Member States to ensure quality standards.

IsDB will consider contributions to WHO's strategic plans to assist Member States to build national capacities, launch national infection control systems and electronic surveillance systems, strengthen research capacity for clinical trials and develop the health workforce.

IsDB and WHO underlined the crucial role of IAG in raising awareness and disseminating Shariah-compliant health messages through religious leaders' networks and activities.

IAG engages with UNICEF, faith-based groups on COVID-19 response



Dr Al-Mazrou outlined IAG's contributions.

The IAG has been fully engaged in efforts to respond to religious challenges of the COVID-19, working closely with global partners and faith-based organizations.

IAG Executive Committee Chairman Dr Yagob Al-Mazrou attended a virtual consultation organized by UNICEF and Religions for Peace.

Faith leaders from different religious backgrounds in the Region shared experiences on increasing awareness, strengthening coordinated efforts and mobilizing support for an inter-faith response to COVID-19.

Dr Al-Mazrou gave a general presentation on the IAG, its partners, mission, objectives and achievements since its establishment in 2013.

He outlined IAG's contributions to regional and national efforts to raise awareness about Shariah-compliant best practices to help contain the spread of COVID-19.

IAG has developed social media religious messages on physical distancing, mass gatherings, self isolation, hand-washing, burial and charity during the time of COVID-19.

IAG national groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan held advocacy meetings with scholars, mosque imams and community leaders to widely disseminate these messages.

They have recorded video messages and Friday sermons in local languages to sensitize local populations on the COVID-19 response.