GENEVA, 17 JANUARY 2012 -The World Health Organization (WHO) Executive Board, currently holding its 130th session, has appointed **Dr Ala Alwan** as the **new WHO Regional Director for WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region (WHO/EMRO)**, which is **headquartered in Cairo, Egypt**. Dr Alwan will take up his appointment for a five-year term starting on 1 February 2012. He is taking over from Dr Hussein Abdel-Razzak Al Gezairy.

EMRO comprises 22 countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

"This is a region with considerable health, socio-economic and political challenges as well as diverse needs. But it is also a region with solid historical achievements and great promise," said Dr. Alwan in his acceptance speech. "I will focus on achieving the results that we, collectively, know are essential, especially in tackling the health challenges impacting the Region during the current economic and political climate."

Dr Alwan is a native of Iraq. From 2008 until the end of 2011, he was Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health at WHO Headquarters, where he led WHO's work that resulted in the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2011 of the Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases.

Dr Alwan graduated in Medicine from the University of Alexandria. He practised medicine in Scotland and obtained his postgraduate training and qualifications in the United Kingdom. Following his return to Iraq, he held several positions in clinical and academic medicine and public health. He was Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Mustansiriya University, Baghdad, Iraq.

In 1992, he joined EMRO as Regional Adviser for Noncommunicable Diseases. He then

served as WHO Representative in Oman, and Director, Division of Health Systems Development in EMRO. In 1998, Dr Alwan moved to WHO headquarters as Director for Noncommunicable Diseases Prevention and then Director of the Department of Noncommunicable Diseases Management. In 2001, he became WHO Representative in Jordan. From 2003 to 2005, he was Minister of Education and Minister of Health in the Government of Iraq. From 2005 to January 2008, he was Representative of the Director-General and Assistant Director-General for Health Action in Crises.

The WHO Executive Board is comprised of representatives from 34 Member States. The main functions of the Executive Board are to give effect to the decisions and policies of the World Health Assembly, to advise it and generally facilitate its work.