**Key facts**

**Bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change when exposed to antimicrobial drugs**, making the infections they cause more difficult and sometimes impossible to treat.

At least **700 000 people around the world die each year** due to infections caused by resistant microbes.

In the WHO Western Pacific Region, an estimated **4.4% of new and 22% of previously treated TB cases are multidrug resistant**.

Globally, WHO estimates that **only 50% of antibiotics are used correctly**.

Worldwide, **70% of antibiotics are used in animals, 30% in humans**.

**Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** happens when microorganisms (such as bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites) change when they are exposed to antimicrobial drugs (such as antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, antimalarials and antihelminthics). Microorganisms that develop AMR are sometimes referred to as "superbugs".

In the Western Pacific Region, AMR is a growing problem. **Alarming levels of resistance have been reported in countries of all income levels**, resulting in common diseases becoming untreatable and life-saving medical procedures becoming riskier to perform. The main drivers of AMR in the Region are the **misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants, transmission of infections and environmental contamination**.

AMR poses a formidable challenge to achieving universal health coverage and threatens progress on many of the Sustainable Development Goals, including health, food security, clean water and sanitation, and alleviation of poverty and inequality.

Estimates indicate that drug-resistant infections already cause **at least 700 000 deaths worldwide every year**, including 230 000 deaths from multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, a figure that could increase to 10 million deaths globally per year by 2050 if no action is taken.

Governments recognize the need for action to combat AMR as part of their development agenda. Almost all Member States in the Western Pacific Region have demonstrated high-level commitment through the development of multisectoral national action plans. Full implementation of these plans is now essential.

**WHO response**

Based on consultations with Member States, the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific has identified health security, including **AMR, as a top priority** for the Organization's work in the Region over the next five years.

Working with Member States and partners, WHO will continue to fight AMR in the Region with innovative approaches. These include:

- the development of a **new regional framework that reflects a changing context as well as the need for new ways of working** (sustainability, future-oriented, contextual and for all and by all) to help countries strengthen their current priorities and work on AMR
- supporting implementation of multisectoral national action plans;
- strengthening country systems (surveillance, stewardship, consumption monitoring) to combat AMR; and
- improving awareness and fostering behaviour change to combat AMR.

In supporting countries, WHO uses a **cross-cutting, multisectoral approach** to bring together experts on health systems, regulation, health security and communicable diseases, it also works with partner organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).