

## PRESS RELEASE

Pakistan leadership in assistive technology for disabled has been acknowledge by Global Community, says Saira Afzal Tarar

Islamabad: 8 May 2018- Federal Minister National Health Services Saira Afzal Tarar said that Pakistan has taken a major step in including disabilities in its Prime Minister's National Program that will provide access to facilities and assistive products to all beneficiaries of the program who need them including wheel chairs, crutches, white canes, tripod, quadrupeds sticks and hearing aids. She was addressing Regional Inter-Country Consultative Meeting on Improving Access to Assistive Technology in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, today in Islamabad

She said our governments have a responsibility of meeting their global and regional commitments. In view of the evolving needs of populations, access to assistive technology is as important as access to other technologies.

Minister said without assistive technology, people in need are often excluded, isolated and locked into poverty, and the burden of morbidity and disability increases. Access to assistive technology should be an inherent component of universal health coverage and needs to be integrated into efforts to attain target 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

She said with the conviction that all global and regional initiatives only gain meaning when they are implemented at the country level, the current Regional Inter-Country Meeting is being held. The main goal is to obtain country perspectives on proposed vision and strategies to ensure the provided guidance is feasible, relevant and can be effectively implemented at the country level in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Minister said this forum reflects our collective resolve to stand up for the rights of those in need of assistive technology and take critical steps to ensure their access.

The Minister said this cause is very close to my heart. I have had the honour of launching the Assistive Products List in 2016 on the sidelines of 69th World Health Assembly.

We were able to garner support to take the issue to the 142nd Executive Board and with the help of Allah Almighty it is now coming up in the 71st World Health Assembly this month.

We have come a long way but there is much more to be done. Our mission will only be accomplished if each and everyone in need of assistive technology has access to these devices.