

Putin to Join Health Experts at WHO Forum

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The  **Moscow Times**

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin will join more than 300 leading health officials on Monday as they discuss climate change, HIV, tuberculosis, tobacco and alcohol at an annual meeting of the World Health Organization's Europe chapter.

The four-day meeting, which unites 53 countries with 780 million people, is being held for the first time in Russia at the invitation of Health and Social Development Minister Tatyana Golikova, WHO's Europe director Zsuzsanna Jakab told reporters Friday.

"It will be a historical event for Europe which will set a new course for the years ahead and for the next 10 years," said Jakab, who took office in February.

Tuberculosis and HIV are among the lingering health problems that the WHO wants to examine, with both diseases posing an increasing threat to European countries, including Russia, Jakab said.

"We will start to review what changes have taken place," she said.

Russia has an estimated 1 million people who are HIV-positive, with the number growing by 8 percent annually.

The biggest threat for Europe comes from diseases linked to tobacco and alcohol, which also are very relevant for Russia, Jakab said.

A total of 33.8 percent of Russian adults smoke daily, while 51.4 percent of all adults are exposed to second-hand smoke in public places, Jakab wrote in a commentary published in The Moscow Times on Friday. The figures come from a WHO survey that will be released later this year.

Climate change has brought new challenges for health care that Muscovites might have witnessed during weeks of an unprecedented heat wave and thick toxic smog this summer, Jakab said.

She also recommended that all adults get vaccinated against swine flu.

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