

19 November 2023, Beirut, Lebanon – On 16 November 2023, Lebanon’s Minister of Public Health Dr Firass Abiad briefed ambassadors, heads of United Nations (UN) agencies and other officials from the international community on the country’s health emergency readiness and response plan. The Ministry of Public Health and WHO co-organized the briefing in light of increasing hostilities, which are adding to the unprecedented socioeconomic and political challenges facing the country.

The Minister highlighted: “The emergency plan aims to keep pace with the repercussions of the development of events in the short term, but its importance lies in its effects in the longer term.” He added that a public health emergency operations centre (PHEOC) had been activated and capacity-training programmes to empower health workers launched.

He also said that work had begun to raise the readiness of hospitals and primary health care centres, focusing on:

, to provide immediate treatment for potential war wounded, whether in border areas or in areas likely to constitute a medical and treatment location, including by trauma care pre-positioning trauma and other medical supplies at referral hospitals and the central warehouse;

, by strengthening health services, particularly primary health care centres which provide essential providing health care for people displaced from their homes due to violence services, including mental health and psychosocial support; and

through the PHEOC at the national and subnational levels, enhancing coordination of readiness and response

Welcoming this, Dr Abdinasir Abubakar, WHO Representative in Lebanon, stated, “WHO is fully behind the government at this critical moment, providing technical expertise and critical medical supplies. One of our priorities is ensuring that the PHEOC is running smoothly so that needs are accurately identified, and quickly met in a coordinated and efficient manner.”

. He expressed thanks to [Lebanon National Health Strategy](#) The Minister also briefed those in attendance on progress made in reforming the health sector in line with the recent donors and partners who have already contributed to health sector reforms, but outlined that more needs to be done in the short and long term.

UN Resident Coordinator in Lebanon Mr Imran Riza acknowledged the strong leadership of the Ministry of Public Health and the considerable achievements made in the last few years, despite many challenges. He assured the Minister that UN agencies and other partners will continue to work with the Ministry to address challenges and strengthen ongoing emergency readiness and response.

The Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Lebanon Her Excellency Ms Sandra De Waele reaffirmed the EU’s commitment to continue working with the government to

improve the Lebanese health system. She pointed out the importance of improving access to health services for the most vulnerable, while simultaneously pursuing short- and long-term reforms of the health sector.

Cross-border fighting between Lebanon and Israel has been on the rise since the start of the conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory on 7 October 2023. Since then, 77 people have been killed on the Lebanese side, with 331 more injured and over 46 000 people displaced. Attacks on health care, affecting facilities, ambulances and health workers, have also been reported.

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