



6 August 2020 – Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, our Region was plagued by emergencies. More than 70 million people were directly or indirectly affected by political conflict or natural disasters and in need of humanitarian aid.

In the past 6 months, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, the Region was impacted by another large-scale crisis that resulted in further illness and death.

This week, we faced more tragedy in Lebanon, as a cataclysmic explosion near the main port in Beirut sowed devastation across entire neighbourhoods, killing more than 135 people and injuring thousands more.

We all watched in horror as a country and people already ravaged by years of civil unrest, economic hardship, a refugee crisis and a COVID-19 pandemic were literally ripped to pieces.

Homes, livelihoods, and hospitals were completely destroyed or severely damaged, and years of overall investments were lost. More importantly, the psychosocial impact of the blast has affected everyone across the entire country, opening the deep unseen wounds of previous years of unrest.

While these events test our individual and collective ability to endure catastrophes they also offer a glimmer of hope as we see the best of humanity come to light in the aftermath. Immediately after the blast, communities and countries spontaneously geared into action by helping locate missing persons, providing food, clothing and shelter to those affected, and

donating blood to help the seriously injured.

Several countries in the Region have delivered medicines and medical supplies, and are deploying multidisciplinary emergency teams and equipment, field hospitals and other support.

Today, WHO delivered trauma and surgical supplies enough to treat a total of 2000 people, airlifted from Dubai on a plane donated by the United Arab Emirates. Working with authorities and partners on the ground we are working hard to identify health needs and fill gaps.

As we work hand in hand to respond to this emergency and save lives, we call on the international community to once again show solidarity and support towards all people in need in Lebanon, given the additional challenges that they now face.

Under our regional vision of "Health for All by All: a call for solidarity and action", WHO is committed to ensuring access to health care for all people, everywhere, and we can only succeed in this goal as one united front.

Our hearts and prayers are with all people in Lebanon as they face this tragic event, and our condolences go to the families and friends of the people whose lives were tragically lost. We stand by the people of Lebanon and offer our unwavering support.

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