



26 June 2023 – In just a few hours' time, the hajj season for 2023 (1444 H) will begin. Millions of

Muslims from every corner of the world are coming to Makkah. This year is of great significance as hajj is back to regular practice, with higher numbers of pilgrims expected after 3 years of special measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Continuing our strong and longstanding partnership, a WHO mission comprising experts from both the WHO Regional Office and our Country Office in Saudi Arabia has been deployed to work closely with the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia on appropriate public health preparedness measures to prevent any potential disease outbreaks and provide support as needed.

We are confident that the Ministry of Health and all concerned Hajj authorities are sparing no efforts and that mitigation measures to ensure a safe pilgrimage have been put in place in accordance with the requirements of the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005). These measures include effective surveillance to ensure prompt detection of and response to any infectious disease outbreaks among pilgrims; infection prevention and control; proper sanitation; food safety; vaccination; risk communication; and timely response.

In previous years, these measures have proved to be very effective in ensuring a safe and healthy hajj season with no reported disease outbreaks or other public health problems. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 response should help make the measures even more effective and impactful.

While we are pleased that, as WHO's Director-General announced on 5 May 2023, COVID-19 no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, it remains an ongoing health issue and we must stay vigilant and continue to implement preventive public health measures among pilgrims in keeping with our regional vision of Health for All by All.

I would like to express my deep appreciation of all the health care workers and volunteers who are contributing to this year's hajj by providing health care services to help and protect the health of pilgrims.

I would like also to wish all pilgrims a blessed hajj and safe return to their homes after concluding their spiritual journey in this year's hajj.

Eid Al-Adha Al-Mubarak | Regional Director's statement
General health advice and guidelines for pilgrims

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