

**Statement from Dr Ahmad Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director and Mr Ted Chaiban, UNICEF Regional Director**



Tehran, 16 October 2019 □ “Very recently during the United Nations General Assembly and in Astana last year, we came together to reaffirm that primary health care is the foundation for achieving universal health coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In a discussion today on strengthening primary health care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region we covered four key areas:

Accessible, and quality front line health workers with the right skill mix,

Centrality of immunization and increased coverage in countries around the region,

Integration of nutrition and early childhood as basic services in primary health care and

Increased active engagement with communities in developing primary health care services that best suits their needs.

“To tackle a series of challenges facing region we agreed on the following:

WHO and UNICEF will continue to work to co-lead the SDG Global Action Plan Accelerator on Primary Health Care aiming at bringing the UN family and other partner organisations such as The Global Alliance for Vaccines International (GAVI) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and malaria, around common goals and approaches for strengthening PHC at the county level in the region.

Better evidence-based data: the primary health care measurement and improvement initiative will help identify progress in countries around the region towards improving primary health care challenges and help address them.

To address the severe shortage of family physicians in the region, WHO, UNICEF, the American University of Beirut and the World Organization of Family Doctors, have developed a one-year regional professional diploma programme in family medicine\*.

The private health sector in the Eastern Mediterranean Region has grown substantially in recent years. Growth had minimum policy direction and little planning from governments. Six countries – Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia and Yemen – will operationalize a framework for action on effective engagement with the private sector”.

“Time is running fast and the time to act is now. We call on governments, the private sector and health partners around the region to join efforts to achieve universal health coverage for every woman, every man and every child in this region by 2030”.

\* Programme implementation will start early next year in Bahrain, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Somalia and the United Arab Emirates.

For more information

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