



**International Atomic Energy Agency**

**IAEA statement to the WHO Regional Committee for Eastern Mediterranean**

**9 – 12 October 2023**

Honourable Ministers,

Dear Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

The IAEA is mandated to accelerate and enlarge the safe, peaceful and secure application of nuclear science and technology to promote sustainable development. This includes, in the field of health, the diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of diseases.

Cancer has become a global crisis. By 2040 it is estimated that over 70% of the global cancer burden will fall on low- and middle-income countries. To avoid countless deaths and immeasurable suffering, access to prevention, diagnostics, and treatment must be enhanced to ensure the achievement of cancer care for all.

Excellencies,

The IAEA has supported many Member States of the Eastern Mediterranean in their efforts to build capacity to provide access to diagnostic and treatment services, particularly for cancer. Support is provided through specialised short- and long-term training, expert advice in the field, and through the provision of essential equipment.

In **Egypt**, for example, the IAEA has upgraded and improved cyclotron performance to produce medical radioisotopes for the diagnosis of non-communicable diseases.

In **Jordan**, the IAEA provided advanced medical equipment, including Linear Accelerator and SPECT-CT, and soon to be augmented with a PET machine at the public Al Bashir Hospital in Amman.

In **Morocco**, the IAEA has supported training on high-precision techniques for radiation oncologists, medical physicists and radiation therapy technicians from eight major teaching hospitals. The Agency has also helped Morocco to combat dietary deficiencies of iron and other micronutrients.

In **Tunisia**, the IAEA has enabled the use of radiopharmaceuticals for PET scans to diagnose non-communicable diseases.

To increase regional training, quality assurance and quality control of radiation medicine and research capacity, the IAEA identifies collaborating centres in its Member States. Recently, to expand access to radiation medicine under the IAEA's flagship Rays of Hope initiative, the IAEA announced the designation of five new Anchor Centres: the University Hospital Centre of Bab El-Oued and Pierre and Marie Curie Cancer Centre in Algeria; the King Hussein Cancer Center in Jordan; the National Institute of Oncology in Morocco; the Ege University Faculty of Medicine in Türkiye, as well as the Atomic Energy Cancer Hospital in Islamabad, Pakistan. All five are regional leaders in cancer care, with decades of experience participating in IAEA activities. They will contribute to building up regional expertise in medication imaging and radiotherapy and will increase access to diagnosis and treatment for cancer patients.

Quality is another key area in medicine, and the IAEA's Quality Management Audits provide support to facilities to improve clinical practice. Since 2009, the IAEA has conducted 75 Quality Audits in Nuclear Medicine - known as

QUANUM - in 38 countries around the world, including in Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates. Another service, known as QUATRO, provides quality support for Radiation Oncology, while and the service QUAADRIL provides advice on the quality of diagnostic radiology standards and workflow processes.

Excellencies,

The IAEA prioritises partnerships to improve health in the Eastern Mediterranean. We have forged new partnerships – both with traditional and non-traditional partners those who share our mission and values – our common goal to support Member States to deliver on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Working jointly with WHO and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the IAEA helps Member States to develop comprehensive cancer control programmes. Together, the three organizations conduct needs assessments called imPACT Reviews that support evidence-based policies and programmes for effective responses to cancer. To date, well over one hundred imPACT Reviews have been carried out. Last year, imPACT Reviews were conducted in Jordan, and follow up missions were carried out in Iraq and Syria.

Excellencies,

In closing, allow me to assure you that the IAEA remains WHO's committed partner in its noble mission of promoting and improving access to essential health services in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Thank you.