Erbil, Iraq, 25 August 2020 – The World Health Organization (WHO) has today delivered 6 ambulances to the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan region to improve ambulatory and life-saving services for the vulnerable population of Syrian refugees and the host community in the Erbil governorate of Iraq. The WHO consignment also included 22 tonnes of health technologies to support the efforts of the Government in containing COVID-19. It included oxygen concentrators, nucleic acid extraction kits, viral transport medium, personal protective equipment and intensive care hospital beds.

“Strong ambulatory and referral services are the backbone of health care services,” said Dr Adham R. Ismail Abdel Moneim, WHO Representative in Iraq. “The increasing demand for accessible and timely provision of essential emergency and referral services necessitate an urgent intervention to support national health capacity to save more lives. These ambulances will help to achieve this goal. They will be placed at health facilities which serve a high number
of refugees and the host community in Erbil,” Dr Abdel Moneim added.

In 2019, local health authorities and partners in the Kurdistan region reported an urgent need for additional ambulances to maintain 24/7 emergency referral services between primary, secondary and referral hospitals in the region, in which more than 1.8 million vulnerable people, including Syrian refugees, are accommodated. This population has been paying out of pocket and renting private vehicles without assistance to transfer emergency cases to the nearest referral health facility.

The ambulances are equipped with GPS tracking systems and essential equipment to stabilize patients with urgent medical conditions, including heart attacks and traumatic injuries, and patients with other severe medical conditions.
WHO would like to express its gratitude to the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Government of Kuwait for providing the funds to materialize this lifesaving support, which will directly benefit hundreds of thousands of Iraqi and Syrian refugees living in camps and within the host community in the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

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