



Beirut, 17 July 2023 – The Ambassador of Italy to Lebanon, Nicoletta Bombardiere, together with the Minister of Public Health, Dr Firass Abiad, today visited the Ministry of Public Health's central drug warehouse in Karantina, accompanied by the WHO Representative in Lebanon, Dr Abdinasir Abubakar, as part of the Italian Government's ongoing support for improving access to life-saving cancer care among vulnerable population groups in Lebanon and building the country's pharmaceutical system.

The visit coincided with the arrival of medications procured with the support of the Italian Government to the central drug warehouse, and provided an opportunity for the Ambassador to get acquainted with the country's overall system of drug distribution.

Following a brief introduction by the warehouse manager, Dr Maha Naous, there was a technical presentation from the national e-health programme director, Lina Abou Mrad, on Meditrack, the Ministry's tracking and tracing system. The visit ended with a guided tour of the warehouse, including the storage areas, the temperature control mechanisms and the inventory.

The ongoing political and economic crises in Lebanon have had a devastating impact on the access of children and adults to life-saving cancer medication, resulting in increased morbidity and mortality. The support provided by the Italian Government helps to address the urgent need to address this shortage of medicines and improve access to basic health services among vulnerable patients.

The Italian Government's contribution to procuring oncology medications, through the WHO's Bilateral Emergency Fund, has amounted to 1 250 000 euros over the past two years, benefitting over 300 children and 1000 adult patients.

Ambassador Bombardiere reaffirmed Italy's support to Lebanon during this challenging period, saying "Italy remains committed to assisting the efforts of the Ministry of Public Health in improving the public health system and ensuring better access to medical care, including life-saving medications. We will continue to work closely with Lebanese institutions and international organizations to respond to the urgent needs of the population".



Minister Abiad emphasized the effective utilization of donor funds stating that "The support of the Italian Government to Lebanon has been instrumental for the maintenance of essential functions of the health sector and for the adoption of innovative approaches, including digital transformation projects. The implementation of MediTrack constituted a reform initiative for enhancing equitable access to medications and for the cost-effective use of resources".

Dr Abubakar acknowledged the generous support of the Italian Government and the strong collaboration of the Italian Embassy and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) in Lebanon, highlighting the importance of filling critical gaps during humanitarian crises, but also of supporting the recovery of the health system, as demonstrated by the support of the Italian Government for both the provision of cancer medication and strengthening the country's pharmaceutical tracking and tracing system.

“The Italian Government’s generous support will enable the Ministry of Public Health and WHO to reach and save more children and adults who are suffering from cancer”, he said.

Finally, the WHO Representative thanked the Minister of Public Health and Ambassador Bombardiere for their support and collaboration, and said that WHO would continued to work with all stakeholders for greater access to basic health services under the umbrella of universal health coverage and health system building.

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