

31 October 2021, Damascus – A high level delegation from the Syrian Ministry of Health starts its official visit to Oman today to learn about best practices in establishing emergency operations centres and strengthening public health response mechanisms.

Supporting Syria's health system and strengthening public health emergency preparedness and response capacities and capabilities are high on the agenda of the Syria's Ministry of Health. Based on the recent lessons learnt from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health has committed to establish fully functioning Public Health Emergency Operations Centers (PHEOCs) at national and governorate levels during the next two years

The visit, facilitated by the World Health Organization, will allow the Syrian delegation to learn about the functions and operations of PHEOCs and all its components through a structured visit to the existing PHEOCs in Oman.

The Ministry of Health will gain insights into Oman's COVID-19 preparedness and response coordination, strategies and approaches to contain the pandemic within the framework of Oman's public health care system. The Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Health will also showcase the country's surveillance and public health laboratory capacities, as well as introduce to the healthy cities project and experience as part of addressing the social determinants of health.

Meetings are planned with His Highness Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Saïd, Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, HE Dr Ahmed bin Mohamed Al-Saidi Minister of Health; and other high level officials in the health sector. The visit will contribute to the vision of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region to promote Health for All by All, calling for solidarity and action of everyone to help maximize health and well-being across the Region.

Syria's decade-long ongoing conflict coupled with the many challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact increased strain and suffering among Syria's population in 2020 and humanitarian needs worsening in 2021. Years of conflict have left the health care system incredibly fragile and the COVID-19 pandemic blighted the system further, compounded by a depletion of highly trained public health workforce. Regional and global cooperation is critical now more than ever to address the Syrian's prolonged fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals stretching their capacity to treat COVID-19 cases, as well as to

address the shortage of COVID-19 vaccines, life saving medicines and supplies to meet the growing needs of the population.

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