

152nd Executive Board Meeting, January–February, 2023



7 February 2023 – Let me again express my deepest condolences to the people of Syria. As my

colleague Dr Iman Shankiti noted, we expect the death toll to increase in the coming days. Our hearts and thoughts are with the families and loved ones of those whose lives were lost as a result of this tragic event.

Our priority now is to make sure that those who have been injured receive the life-saving care they need, as soon as possible, to prevent further loss of life and disability. And that those who have lost their homes and livelihoods are not exposed to further public health risks.

Next month marks almost 12 years since the conflict in Syria began. Astonishingly, more people need humanitarian assistance in Syria today than at any time since the crisis began. Those needs have soared further as a result following yesterday's earthquake. It has added yet another layer of complexity to the many challenges already facing the Syrian people.

But despite facing multiple concurrent and compounding crises over recent years, the international community has largely forgotten Syria. Even as health and humanitarian needs increase, funding continues to decrease.

It should not take a tragic event such as this crisis for us to turn our attention to Syria.

Colleagues,

Let us convey our respect and admiration to the dedicated Syrian health workforce who are responding to yet another emergency. Despite overwhelming demands and limited resources, they remain as committed as always to saving lives.

WHO is there to support them, as we employ an all-modalities approach to access those in need. Experts from WHO's regional trauma initiative have already deployed and our logistics hub in Dubai is in ensuring critical supplies are delivered in a timely manner.

WHO emergency experts are effectively coordinating across multiple offices, from Damascus

and Aleppo, to Gaziantep and Ankara, to our regional offices in Cairo and Copenhagen, and our headquarters in Geneva. The Organization's 3 levels are coming together effectively to meet the health needs of those impacted by this tragic event.

As the world once again turns its attention to Syria, let me repeat: it should not take a tragic event such as this for us to remember the Syrian people. Today, they need more than just our sympathy. They need to be allowed to live a life free of disease, hunger, and other public health threats. And together, through solidarity and action, as usual, I have no doubt that we can make this happen, in line with our regional vision of "health for all, by all".

**[Lifesaving response to earthquakes in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic](#)**

Monday 6th of May 2024 09:34:53 AM