

Cairo, 7 July 2022 – In a few days, tens of millions of people around the world will observe Eid Al-Adha, the Muslim festival marking the culmination of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and commemorating the sacrifice of Abraham; I wish us all healthy, happy, and safe celebrations.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, this religious occasion comes at a time when countries continue to face major health emergencies, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. More than 100 million people across the Region remain in need of humanitarian aid, including almost 32 million people forcibly displaced.

Millions of people will mark Eid Al-Adha this year as they grieve over the loss of loved ones, struggle with illness or disease, or mourn the loss of their homes or livelihoods. My thoughts and prayers go out to those who have faced unimaginable suffering. My thoughts also go out to the families of the health workers and humanitarian workers whose lives were tragically lost to COVID-19 or other threats as they worked hard to save the lives of others.

But in every crisis, humankind has invariably demonstrated its ability to adapt and resolve to survive. Despite the risks and hardships that millions of people in our Region continue to face, Eid Al-Adha brings with it the spirit of solidarity, optimism, and renewed hope.

In line with our Regional regional Vision 2023 of “Health for All, by All”, COVID-19 highlighted that it is only through solidarity, coordination, and action that we can overcome collective adversity and suffering. And we have seen the impact of these actions in other emergencies across the Region at individual, community, and national levels: from volunteer health workers travelling to remote locations in Pakistan to vaccinate children against polio, to communities coming together to help earthquake survivors in Afghanistan, to the Sultanate of Oman providing technical support to health workers in Yemen.

This Eid Al-Adha, I would like to thank our Member States and international donors who have supported our life-saving work in the Eastern Mediterranean Region at a time when we are facing more emergencies and disasters than ever before. I urge you to stand by the millions of people- in- need who depend on your support, despite competing global health priorities.

I would like to thank our WHO staff, health partners, and health workers on the ground who are working around the clock to deliver health aid and health services to those who need them most, sometimes placing their own lives at risk.

And I would like to also express gratitude to all people living across WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region who each do their part to establish human ties, protect their own lives and the lives of others, and preserve the public health and well-being of their communities.

The pandemic continues to serve as a reminder that our survival and well-being depend not just on our own actions, but also on the actions of those around us. Millions are alive today only because of this solidarity and collective action. Let us keep this in mind as we celebrate religious and social rites safely this year.

Stay safe, stay kind, and Eid Mubarak!

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