

*Ensuring continuity of learning for all children in-person or remotely is a priority as COVID-19 cases continue to surge across the region and disrupting the education process.*

To watch the music video, download the song and access multimedia products, click [here](#)

AMMAN, 8 October 2020 - UN Agencies\* in the region unveiled today “Rej’et El Sineh” [‘Learning is Back’], a song to encourage the return to learning for all children and youth across the region.

Music is a powerful medium to disseminate messages to communities. Songs can be entertaining and equally educational, especially for children. This project comes as part of the UN Agencies Regional Joint Action Plan to support countries in the region to put in place policies and strategies that will ensure all children continue their learning in a safe environment, be it at home or in school. UN agencies aim to reach children, parents and teachers with motivational messages and credible information about returning to learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic had interrupted education for nearly 110 million children and young people in the Middle East and North Africa, due to closures and lockdowns. Despite great efforts made, many children have not been able to keep up with their schoolwork. Adequate access to the internet, electricity and electronic devices remain a challenge and alternative

off-line options, including paper based, continue to be relevant.

The economic situation is likely to put pressure on vulnerable families, particularly refugees, not to send children back to school. Globally, nearly half of refugee girls are at risk of dropping out. In the MENA region, at least 1.3 million children in the region are at risk of not coming back to schools. The crisis will further put resources and budgets allocated for the education sector at risk.

The song encourages children to continue learning despite the numerous obstacles they may face, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of adhering to the necessary health measures when reopening education facilities. It is accompanied by a music video that illustrates the guidelines of the safe reopening of schools. This includes the need for physical distancing, wearing masks as required, washing hands and maintaining overall hygiene. It also highlights the blended approach to learning that combines children engaging face to face learning in school with remote learning at home.

The song is a twist to a 1976 original song. Last year, UNICEF included it in its first-ever produced children’s songs album “11” \* with songs and lyrics from the world-famous Elias Rahbani.

The UN bodies hope that this song, together with other tools the partners made available in the past months, will demonstrate that education and schooling in the time of COVID-19 is possible. As the new academic year 2020/2021 starts in extraordinary circumstances, the UN agencies remain committed to support governments with back to learning plans and initiatives towards continuing quality, inclusive and equitable education in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 aspirations.

In this unsettling period, compounded by the epidemiological situation, access to education and

other basic services, remain crucial for all children and youth, particularly the most vulnerable, to save our future.

\*United Nation’s Children Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

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### **Notes to Editors:**

- The United Nation’s Children Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) joined hands to translate the Global Framework on Reopening of Schools (April/June 2020) into a regional action plan referred to in the note.
- As part of this regional action plan, the Agencies organized a series of webinars with Ministries of Education to discuss the impact of COVID19 on education, to share good practices and ongoing challenges moving forward.
- A ministerial meeting on Back to Learning will take place on the 14th of October.

**\*About “11”**

UNICEF with the support of the European Union and in partnership with the renowned Lebanese composer Jad Rahbani, launched in early 2019 “11”, an album featuring songs performed by children in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. The Album was originally composed by the world-famous Elias Rahbani in 1976, during the war in Lebanon. The songs of the Album are free to [download on this link](#).

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