

17 September 2021 – I join Dr Tedros in thanking you – the media – as well as all health workers, civil society, donors, UN sister agencies and health partners for the enormous efforts made, particularly over the past two years, to prioritize the well-being of people in Lebanon and ensure the continuity of health care delivery.

Over the past two days, Dr Tedros, Dr Shankiti, and myself, together with the other members of our delegation, met with national and international stakeholders to discuss critical issues related to the health system capacity and viability. Our key focus was to build on our ongoing work to serve all people in the country in line with our global vision for equity, quality and timely access to health care.

Unfortunately, we all know that Lebanon is facing a severe and complex crisis that is affecting the health sector and having a devastating impact on people's well-being.

We also know the country is rapidly and progressively losing its long-standing status as a key medical destination in the Region for highly qualified human health resources, technology, and timely access to quality health care.

The current crisis is not only placing the health of the population at risk, but also threatening regional and global health security. Accordingly, it is not enough to just fill gaps in health needs. It is imperative that we join efforts to address critical structural needs for the health system, and deter any imminent environmental, social and economic risks that have a negative impact on health.

For the past 15 years, WHO has been committed to filling gaps in health care for the people in Lebanon when needed. We also guided health partners to ensure sustainable support for the health system so that we could fulfil our common vision of universal health coverage and ensuring health as an undeniable human right for all.

We commend WHO's office in Lebanon for addressing the complexity of the health issues, providing support when needed, and most importantly, placing health as a priority for the crisis response, mobilizing resources, and ensuring health is included in all policies.

As we have seen firsthand over the past two days, the needs on the ground are immense. But the capacities in this country are great. We are however, concerned that the impact of the crisis is forcing out skilled human resources and young generations who are the future of the health workforce. This is a critical issue that will need to be urgently addressed to safeguard the health system at large.

WHO is committed to supporting Lebanon in developing a 2030 health agenda in line with the SDG national plan and the SDG3+ roadmap developed for Lebanon, in consultation with all potential partners and stakeholders.

I reiterate WHO's support at all levels to serve the people of Lebanon and support Lebanon's health system. Thank you all for attending today's event.

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