



2 April 2020, Muscat, Oman: H.E. Dr Ahmed Al-Saidi, Minister of Health of Oman, Dr Akjemal Magtymova WHO Representative, H.E. Dr Mohammed Al Hosni, Undersecretary of Health Affairs attending virtual meeting with Dr Ahmed Al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director with ministers of health

From the onset of the outbreak alert, the WHO country office in Oman has provided support to the efforts of national authorities to enhance capacity and resources in preparedness and response to the current public health emergency of international concern – the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the COVID-19 outbreak developed into a pandemic, Oman lost its leader of the past 5 decades His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on 10 January 2020. This was followed by 40 days of national mourning, a key time coinciding with preparatory steps to mitigate the upcoming public health emergency.

The first 2 COVID-19 cases in Oman, diagnosed on 23 February 2020, were linked to travel history to Islamic Republic of Iran. Since then, the new Sultan of Oman, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has mobilized the national response through the newly formed Supreme Committee for COVID-19, established on 10 March. The Supreme Committee is multisectoral, led by the Minister of Interior and chaired by His Majesty Sultan Haitham himself for its key sessions. The health sector is represented by senior leadership within the Ministry of Health. Since its establishment Oman has taken a number of strict measures to halt the COVID-19

outbreak in the country, as well as to support global response under the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005).

“With a response embracing solidarity to COVID-19, WHO Oman continues to work closely with the health ministers of the Region, following with increasingly stringent containment measures taken to slow the spread of COVID-19. These measures have been put in place to prevent onward transmission, and protect frontline health workers,” said Dr Akjemal Magtymova WHO Representative to Oman. Adding that, “The COVID-19 pandemic tests the core of our values: the value of human health, well-being and lives – which is taken very seriously by the Government of Oman, putting together extraordinary response from all those involved coupled with full confidence and incredible solidarity and discipline from the individuals and communities throughout the country.”

In times of crisis, Oman demonstrates in practice its continued commitment to universal health coverage by increasing hospital capacity and the number of intensive care beds, supplies and mobilizing human resources to serve its population. This includes both Omani citizens as well as nearly 48% of non-Omani residents, to whom the Government is extending its diagnostic and treatment coverage for COVID-19, free of charge. H.E. Dr Ahmed Al-Saidi, the Minister of Health, during an e-press conference said, as per the directives of His Majesty the Sultan of Oman, COVID-19 tests and treatment would be made accessible to all communities in the Sultanate, both Omanis and all its residents equally. “The tests and treatment are free for all expatriates.” said Dr Ahmed Al-Saidi.

As part of regional solidarity and to further enhance cross-country experience sharing on national and regional responses to COVID-19 pandemic, Dr Ahmed Al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region held the first virtual meeting with health ministers of the countries of the Eastern-Mediterranean on 2 April 2020. The WHO Regional Director intends to maintain these virtual meetings as a regular platform to highlight key developments in the Region and globally to support WHO Member States in decision-making for successful national and regional responses to the pandemic.

WHO's Oman routine programme work has been halted and all the current efforts being re-oriented to respond to the ongoing health emergency. While at the onset of the emergency, WHO support included speedy shipments for minimum initial requirements of testing supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), the core of WHO-Oman collaboration in the fight against the COVID-19 lies on the principles of internationalism, actions based on science and research, including:

- Exchange, wide dissemination and use of WHO's generated evidence, technical guidelines and procedures that give directions to various preparedness, management and response activities;
- Coherent use of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials and cooperation on responsible media messages;
- National workshops and trainings for the surveillance, management and emergency operations across the Sultanate;
- Engagement in global research, solidarity trial and other partnerships to build evidence for planning/projections, diagnostic, management of COVID-19 infected patients, surveillance and response strategies;
- Mobilizing UN and other partners' contributions under one Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 and coordinating partners' response aligned with the national response, WHO builds upon its strategic mandate to promote health, keep the world safe and protect vulnerable.

WHO continues to appeal to the public to acquire the latest information and updates on COVID-19 from trusted sources, such as health authorities and WHO.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) in Oman has launched a telephone helpline to respond to the public's queries and concerns of COVID-19. In addition to responding to general queries, the contact Center encourages the public to report on symptoms of COVID-19, enabling concerned authorities to provide them with proper medical care.

WHO also encourages the public and national and provincial authorities to follow and promote the recommended basic preventive and protective measures for COVID-19.

[Find more information and guidance from WHO regarding the current outbreak of novel coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#)

Oman Ministry of Health hotline: (+968) 24441999

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