



23 December 2021, Damascus – The EU is allocating an additional €1 million to the World Health Organization (WHO) in Syria to strengthen the COVID-19 response. The humanitarian funding will primarily be used to increase testing capacity and scale up vaccination across Syria.

Health services in Syria are overstretched, the health workforce is working around the clock, and supplies and resources are depleting quickly to address the increased demands of the COVID-19 response.

“WHO continues to provide critical support to respond to the prolonged fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Syria. We appreciate the EU’s latest contribution which will help operationalize vaccination teams to administer newly delivered vaccines and enhance COVID-19 testing capacity to contain emerging cases,” said Dr Akjemal Magtymova, Head of Mission and WHO Representative. “Vaccine hesitancy remains the biggest challenge. We call on all partners to join forces in order to increase vaccine uptake and curb the pandemic.”

The funds will enable WHO to cover part of the vaccination’s operational costs in the coming months and to support 840 vaccinators at fixed facilities; 770 vaccinators at mobile centres in both accessible and hard-to-reach areas; 510 supervisors; 148 supply officers; and transportation costs.

European Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič, said: “EU support to WHO in Syria is crucial to ensure COVID-19 testing and vaccination capacity are urgently stepped up. We need to stand by the Syrians who are threatened by this pandemic, in addition to suffering

the continued consequences of conflict and economic hardship. The EU is committed to shielding the most vulnerable people and caregivers from COVID-19's full force.”

In northwest Syria, WHO will supply COVID-19 PCR kits and sample collection kits to enable 70,000 additional tests at six laboratories. The number of vaccination teams will increase from 40 to 61 by May 2022; 21 teams will be based at fixed health facilities and 40 others will be mobile, targeting people in hard-to-reach areas and camps for displaced people in northwest Syria.

In September this year, the EU contributed €1.5 million to support laboratories and non-governmental organizations in responding to the pandemic. The new €1 million contribution will help maximize efforts to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases in Syria.

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