12 August 2021, Damascus, Syria – WHO welcomes a new donation from the Kuwait Fund For Arab Economic Development to support health care for all people in need in Syria. This new contribution of US$ 3 million comes at a critical time as the health system faces shortages in resources due to sanctions and is overwhelmed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“Kuwait has been a long-standing partner to WHO in our work to save the lives of the Syrian people. We are grateful for this generous contribution that has come as a major step towards reviving the availability of health care services to all people in need, and supports WHO’s commitment to alleviate the immense suffering of the Syrian people,” said Dr Akjemal Magtymova, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Syria.

Gaps in local production of medicines within Syria have left significant shortages in much needed essential medicines, especially for patients with chronic conditions. Noncommunicable diseases are now the highest cause of morbidity in Syria, accounting for 45% of all deaths in the country. This new funding will enable WHO to increase access of vulnerable people to life-saving treatment for noncommunicable diseases, including asthma and chronic pulmonary conditions, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and kidney failure.

With this generous support, WHO will also continue strengthening the COVID-19 response, as well as support the national immunization programme in the implementation of COVID-19 vaccination campaigns targeting high-risk groups, including internally displaced people and host communities.

Part of the funds will also be used to purchase 5 fully equipped ambulances that will boost national efforts to strengthen the management of trauma cases, increase access to health care services, and facilitate transportation and referral of emergency cases among internally displaced people and host communities to the nearest health facility. As the crisis enters its eleventh year, 6.1 million people remain internally displaced and are at increased risk of infectious diseases due to limited access to safe water and sanitation, overcrowding and other risk factors. In Syria today, there are cases of epidemic-prone diseases like acute diarrhoea, leishmaniasis, and suspected hepatitis.

As of June 2021, only 47% of public hospitals are fully functioning, resulting in access to health services to millions being crippled. Shortages of trained health workers are very visible on the

ground, as a result of more than a decade of war, and a declining economic situation.

“Syria is experiencing a protracted political and socioeconomic crisis that has resulted in a severe deterioration of living conditions. The scale, severity and complexity of humanitarian needs remain extensive. The health system has taken a devastating blow as a direct result of the crisis and aggravated by the sanctions coupled with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Long-standing partners to WHO, such as the Government of Kuwait, help WHO ensure that health care services to all vulnerable Syrians continue uninterrupted, and help us fulfil our common vision of universal health coverage and health care for all by all,” added Dr Magtymova.

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