

Mogadishu, 5 January 2021 – On 17 December 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) country office in Somalia and the Public Health Agency of Sweden signed a non-financial memorandum of understanding (MOU) to formalize a partnership that aims to support the establishment of a National Institute of Health for Somalia.

Years of conflict and recurring natural disasters have weakened the health system in Somalia and limited its capacity. In addition, Somalia lacks a centralized mechanism to gather evidence-based public health information to guide public health decision-making. It is to this end that the Public Health Agency of Sweden, with financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, launched a 4-year project (2019–2023) “Capacity development of the National Institute of Health, Somalia”, in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services.

The overall goal of the project is to support the establishment of an independent National Institute of Health, and to strengthen its organizational and institutional capacity in areas such as health workforce development for public health, field epidemiology training, emergency response, disease surveillance prevention and health promotion activities. A multi-year strategic capacity development programme will be developed in support of establishment of the Institute through a consultative process between WHO, the Public Health Agency of Sweden and the Ministry of Health and Human Services of the Federal Government of Somalia. As the United Nations’s lead technical agency for health, WHO will support this important project with technical support, capacity-building and the facilitation of relevant partnerships, with the collective goal of establishing an effective and capable of building Somalia’s capacity to deal with public health issues and health threats, including developing a national strategy for <sup>1</sup> efficient National Institute of Health integrated disease surveillance and response.

“WHO remains firmly committed to support the establishment of a National Institute of Health as the main technical arm of the Ministry for improving public health capacity of its health workforce. The National Institute of Health would become a national centre of expertise advising the Government on planning and operationalizing appropriate and effective national responses to public health threats, and at the same time, play its role as the main technical body for improving surveillance, laboratory detection and epidemic risk management in the country,” said Dr Mamunur Rahman Malik, the WHO Representative to Somalia.

Dr Anders Tegnell, the State Epidemiologist of Sweden and Deputy Director General of the Public Health Agency of Sweden, visited Mogadishu in March 2020 and met among others, the Honorable Minister Dr Fawziya and WHO Representative Dr Malik to consolidate this collaborative project. “The signing of this MoU with WHO Somalia is an important milestone in our joint efforts to strengthen the health system and to deal with emerging health threats. The right to health is a universal right, and collaboration with countries like Somalia will strengthen our capacity to improve health also in Sweden,” Dr Tegnell said.

This MOU between WHO and the Public Health Agency of Sweden is part of a new, innovative partnership between WHO, Sweden and Somalia’s Ministry for Health which aims to diminish persistent health problems by creating an independent National Institute of Health, as well as by modernizing the country’s health information management system.

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Note to editors: WHO has been working in Somalia for over 30 years, promoting and protecting the health of the people of Somalia by addressing important public health <sup>1</sup>

issues. WHO works in close cooperation with health authorities to build a strong health system and achieve universal health coverage.

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