



Damascus, 2 August 2022 – Italy has contributed 2 million euros to the World Health Organization to support efforts to vaccinate 40% of the targeted population in Syria by the end of 2022.

A number of interventions have so far been implemented at the national level to accelerate COVID-19 vaccination in Syria, including national vaccination campaigns in May and June 2022. During these two campaigns, the Ministry of Health mobilized over 6000 trained health workers to conduct COVID-19 vaccination activities at both fixed health facilities and through mobile medical teams across all governorates of the country.

Despite all these efforts, only 10% of the total population of Syria have received full vaccination. This low coverage is due to high vaccine hesitancy caused by the prolonged and complex crisis coupled with a deteriorating economic situation, both of which have triggered general fatigue among the Syrian population and impeded COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

“Italy recognizes the crucial role of health as an essential engine for the social and economic development of the population. This contribution is in line with the funds made available to WHO in 2020, at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, for a programme aiming at enhancing the national laboratory diagnostic capacity for timely confirmation of COVID-19, and integrates the distribution of almost 4 million doses of Johnson & Johnson donated by Italy at the beginning of 2022 through the COVAX facility,” said Mr Massimiliano D’Antuono, Chargé d’Affaires of the Italian Embassy in Damascus.

“Thanks to the collaboration with WHO, Italy guarantees its support to the health system, considering particularly the low vaccination rate in Syria against a global increase of positive cases. Therefore, this programme allows us to cover the operational costs to expedite the vaccination process and to reach all locations in Syria, confirming our support to the Syrian population” added Mrs Alessandra Piermattei, Director of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation for Lebanon and Syria.

The donation of the Italian Cooperation will support the operational costs of two rounds of intensified vaccination activities in all 14 governorates of Syria, including for internally displaced people, refugees and high-risk groups in formal and informal settlements, contributing to increased vaccination rates and reduction of morbidity and mortality caused by COVID-19.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the Syrian health system, already overburdened by the ongoing crisis and the depletion of health professionals and medical supplies,” said Dr Iman Shankiti, WHO Representative a.i. in Syria.

“WHO welcomes this generous funding from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, which will play a pivotal role in supporting the health system to scale-up COVID-19 vaccination coverage in the country and protecting the lives of people on Syria,” Dr Shankiti added.

Earlier in 2022, Italy donated around 4 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility to boost higher vaccination rates in Syria. This new contribution is an additional milestone towards achieving a more resilient public health system and a healthier tomorrow for the Syrian population.

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