



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

NOTE FOR THE PRESS

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Note for the Media/1
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WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL TRAVELS TO INDONESIA AND SRI LANKA

-- Attends leaders' meeting, tours stricken areas --

Jakarta/Geneva - The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr LEE Jong-wook, has arrived in Jakarta at the start of a five-day visit to Indonesia and Sri Lanka. During the visit, Dr Lee will take part in the Special ASEAN Leaders' meeting on the Aftermath of the Tsunami, to be held in Jakarta on Thursday.

Dr Lee, together with the Executive Director of UNICEF, Carol Bellamy, will travel on Wednesday to some of the worst hit areas around Banda Aceh in northern Sumatra to meet some of the victims of the tsunami and to assess the most urgent health needs. He will also be meeting with and travelling with the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel.

After leaving Indonesia late on Thursday, Dr Lee will travel to Sri Lanka to review progress in the relief effort and to offer further support to the country and to the communities which have been most seriously affected by the tsunami.

Since the tsunami struck, WHO has been working together with the core group of countries helping to provide humanitarian support. WHO has mobilised teams of experts to work with countries to assess the most urgent health needs and to ensure that they are met as rapidly as possible.

The most urgent health need now is to prevent outbreaks of infectious disease, and particularly of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoeal diseases, dysentery and typhoid. It is clear that providing clean water to as many as possible of the affected communities is now the most pressing health priority.

WHO's assistance is focused in five key areas:

- **Disease surveillance and response:** tracking patterns of life-threatening diseases and establishing an early warning system;
- **Coordinated action** with the health system and other health actors locally, nationally and internationally;
- **Providing public health guidance** on responding to disease outbreaks, water quality, sanitation, chronic disease management and mental health;
- **Ensuring access to essential health care** together with all partners and the local health system
- **Helping to coordinate medical supplies** to ensure that supply chains work well and that people get the medicines they need when and where they need them.

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