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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION CONVENES A CONFERENCE TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH NEEDS OF IRAQIS IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

GENEVA | CAIRO | DAMASCUS – The World Health Organization (WHO) is convening a ministerial consultation from 29 to 30 July in Damascus, Syria, to address the health needs of Iraqis in neighbouring countries. The Ministries of Health of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria will discuss how to ensure delivery of health care to the more than 2 million Iraqis estimated to reside in these three countries following the insecurity in Iraq.

The conference will bring together representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the four countries, together with International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UNICEF, and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"We need to work with all partners to address the key health needs of Iraqis. To achieve this, a greater level of coordination and joint work between national authorities and humanitarian health partners is necessary. We also need to reach consensus on the mechanisms to be put in place in each neighbouring country for ensuring health care coverage for Iraqis that have been displaced outside their country," stated Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

The host countries are covering the displaced Iraqis through their national health systems. However, with thousands of people leaving Iraq every month, the national health services are overwhelmed by the growing demand.

Participants at the WHO conference will review the available information on the current health situation among the Iraqis, their access to health services and how the host countries are coping with the additional demand. They will also discuss the best strategies to use to cope with the influx of people and the possible resources required to meet the needs.

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