

Address by

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to the

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON HEALTH AND MIGRATION: JOINTLY SHAPING
THE VISION FOR THE HEALTH OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

Istanbul, Turkey, 17–18 March 2022

Dr Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe,
Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa,
Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here today in Istanbul for this important meeting. Let me start by thanking our hosts. Turkey has been exemplary in providing support and shelter to millions of Syrian refugees, and also in recruiting Syrian health care professionals into its primary health care facilities.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to my brother Dr Hans for his commitment to partnership between WHO's European and Eastern Mediterranean Regions. Refugee and migrant health is a key strategic area for our partnership. The Eastern Mediterranean Region is the source of 67% of all refugees globally, and 41% of internally displaced populations, and unfortunately numbers are expected to continue rising due to persistent conflicts. While 57% of all refugees from our Region remain in the Region, 34% cross borders into the European Region. WHO's European Regional Office is providing strong support to those refugees, notably through its work with the WHO Country Office in Afghanistan and the people of Afghanistan and its efforts to assist Syrians in Europe.

Partnership has become even more important in the era of COVID-19. As we enter the third year of the pandemic, it is clear that we can only conquer this virus by working together. As at 10 March 2022, 672.6 million doses of vaccines have been administered in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, with 47% of people having received one dose and 39% two doses. I am particularly pleased to report that all 22 countries and territories in the Region have a COVID-

19 National Deployment and Vaccination Plan which includes refugees and migrants. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge Jordan and Lebanon, two self-payer countries in the COVAX facility that became the first to offer vaccines to refugees in their countries for free. The global community must support such efforts. We have an obligation to both the countries that host displaced populations and the refugees waiting for a better tomorrow.

Within the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, we are developing a regional strategy on refugee and migrant health based on four strategic objectives: mainstreaming refugees and migrants into national health policies, strategies, and plans; responding promptly and effectively to the needs of refugees and migrants in emergencies; improving the social determinants that affect the health and well-being of refugees and migrants; and strengthening partnerships towards promoting the health of refugees and migrants. Meanwhile, we continue to pursue WHO's goal of promoting the health and well-being of refugees and migrants in all settings and throughout every migration route, in keeping with our regional vision of Health for All by All.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, health is a growing national security concern. We need to strengthen the International Health Regulations and ensure full cooperation among bordering countries to support the continuum of care for refugees and migrants across migration routes. Surveillance and routine health information systems must be sensitive enough to capture displaced populations and migrants in order to provide adequate and appropriate services in a timely manner.

Partnership is crucial for any work on refugee and migrant health. No country or region can tackle the challenges on its own. Let us all work together to ensure Health for All by All so the no one is left behind in the attainment of a better quality of life for humanity as a whole.