

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Regional Director, WHO, Dr. Hussein A. Gezairy, visits Pakistan**

The Regional Director discusses health needs and progress with highest level officials

Islamabad, March 8, 2010: Regional Director, WHO, Dr. Hussein A. Gezairy is currently visiting Pakistan to review the progress made in addressing the health needs of the people of Pakistan and discuss future interventions. During the first day of his visit he has met with the Federal Minister of Health, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Syed Raza Yousaf Raza Gilani, and attended the launch of the “Safety Initiative” and the “Health Emergency & Preparedness Centre”. Senior Officials of the Ministry of Health and WHO Pakistan, including the WHO Representative to Pakistan, Dr. Khalife Bile and the Federal Secretary Health, were also present on the occasions.

In his meeting with the Federal Minister he congratulated the Minister on the progress made in the health interventions. He said that he was encouraged to see the improvements; however, he stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum.

During his meeting with the Prime Minister, Dr. Gezairy thanked Mr. Gilani on his Polio Action Plan and expressed his appreciation on the commitment of the Government on addressing the very important health issues of Polio Eradication and Routine EPI Implementation. He also stresses the need to scale up the efforts in National Hepatitis Control Program and the Mother Neonatal Child Health (MNCH) Programme. He said:

“WHO is a close partner of the Government of Pakistan and supports a large health portfolio in the country. In the last biennium (2008-2009) alone, WHO extended technical assistance amounting to US\$ 100.4 million. Although we have achieved many milestones towards a healthier Pakistan, there is still a lot more to do. The forthcoming National Health Policy is indeed an important achievement. However, closer attention will need to be given to key health initiatives like the communicable disease control and improving the health systems.”

The Prime Minister thanked Dr. Gezairy for the all the support provided by WHO towards development and humanitarian assistance for the people of Pakistan and shared his concerns to address the remaining very important health needs. The Prime Minister said:

“Health is a basic right of every individual and it is the duty of the Government to ensure that there was access to and provision of highest quality health services to all citizen’s of Pakistan. I am thankful to WHO for all the support provided through the years and look forward to an even closer working relationship. I commit the complete cooperation and support to WHO for all its endeavors for our people.”

The Regional Director WHO Pakistan inaugurated the Patient safety Center in Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad. “The Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative” is a WHO strategy, aimed at encouraging and implementing safe health practices in all health institutions based on standardized patient safety protocols. Dr. Gezairy subsequently inspected the room designated as the Patient Safety Centre of PIMS where he was briefed by the Patient Safety

Team of PIMS on various aspects of the initiative and assessment scores in the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences. Current status of implementation includes implementation of elements such as ‘Clean Care is Safer Care’, ‘Safe Surgery Saves Lives’, ‘Infection Control’, ‘Medical Walk Rounds’, ‘Departmental Protocols for Patient Management’ and ‘Hospital Waste Management’.

The Regional Director WHO Pakistan also inaugurated the “National Health Emergency Preparedness Center” which is a joint collaboration of WHO and Ministry of Health. This commitment and resolve of the Ministry of Health to institutionalise Health Emergency Preparedness and Response is an enormous strength of this initiative. The Ministry of Health through this National Health Emergency Preparedness and Response unit will be responsible for and instituting policies on health emergency preparedness and response for the entire country. It would also ensure that the National health policy includes Emergency Preparedness and Response.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been operational in the country for over five decades. It has been working closely with the Ministry of Health on improving the national health indicators and meeting the immediate health needs during crisis situations.

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