

**Improving humanitarian assistance at the heart
of 2nd Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum**

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA (1.3.2020) – Improving humanitarian responses in light of the increasingly complex nature of global emergencies is the leading theme of the 2nd Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum, which opened today in Riyadh.

Over two thousand delegates and the directors of six United Nations Agencies have gathered in Riyadh for this high-level event which brings together humanitarian experts and world leaders to discuss the challenges facing humanitarian action and how to better assist people in need. The forum will result in the presentation of recommendations for ways forward in approving humanitarian response.

The humanitarian consequences of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis were also debated as part of the sessions.

Opening the event, the Supervisor General of King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief), Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah, said: “This Forum is a unique opportunity for global experts in humanitarian affairs to come together and find concrete, practical and workable ways to improve the assistance to those that we collectively serve”.

“Humanitarian action, development and peace,” Dr. Al Rabeeah continued, “are interlinked. Most crises in the world are manmade, and there is a global mandate in the international community to ensure that the humanitarian response is as strong as possible. We also need to act to remove the barriers between humanitarian aid delivery and development. Whether in Yemen, Somalia or in the context of the Syrian crisis, we must act to reinforce the capacities of host communities, something which is often forgotten. Unless we build these capacities, we will continue to deliver humanitarian assistance without developing sustainable solutions”.

The UN Under-Secretary-General representative for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, speaking on behalf of Secretary-General António Guterres, said, “I am grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its generous support to the UN, and particularly for its extensive humanitarian work in Yemen. This region is becoming an increasingly important humanitarian hub”.

He added that the human suffering witnessed today is being driven by various causes. “The only way to respond to these humanitarian challenges is by resolving conflict, by taking action to mitigate the impact of climate change and by delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals”.

The COVID-19 crisis was also the subject of some debate. Speaking about public response to the issue, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, “We need to go into the numbers, we need to go into the facts, and do the right thing instead of panicking. Panic and fear are the worst.”

It was also announced that, in line with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s pioneering role in the humanitarian field, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, will sponsor the upcoming UN pledging conference to fund the 2020 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan.

Amongst the high-level attendees at the Forum today are: Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah, Supervisor General of KSrelief, Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO, David Beasley, Executive Director of WFP, and Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. They were joined by HE Reem Al Hashimy, UAE Minister of State for International Cooperation, Filippo Grandi, the UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees, and Henrietta Fore, the Director of UNICEF.

KSrelief signed agreements with several of its important partners, including the UNPF, UNICEF, UNRWA and others; these agreements cover many humanitarian sectors and will provide urgent assistance to people in need around the world. Details of these agreements will be shared tomorrow, along with the recommendations emerging from the forum.

Note to editors:

- Video clips, social media material and photographs may be obtained from the KSrelief International Centre for Media and Communications (ICMC).
- For media registrations and more information about the sessions and speakers, please visit: <https://rihf.ksrelief.org/Home>

**For all media inquiries, including footage, please contact:
the International Communication and Media Centre
media@ksrelief.org ; WhatsApp: 00966 59 127 1130**

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