

Media Update

14 September 2020

United Nations

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

VIDEO MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY 15 September 2020

As the world confronts COVID-19, democracy is crucial in ensuring the free flow of information, participation in decision-making and accountability for the response to the pandemic. Yet since the beginning of the crisis, we have seen the emergency used in a range of countries to restrict democratic processes and civic space. This is especially dangerous in places where democracy's roots are shallow and institutional checks and balances are weak.

The crisis is also highlighting – and aggravating – long-neglected injustices, from inadequate health systems to social protection gaps, digital divides and unequal access to education; from environmental degradation to racial discrimination and violence against women. Along with the profound human toll, these inequalities are themselves threats to democracy.

Well before the pandemic, frustration was rising, and trust in public authorities was declining. A lack of opportunities was driving economic unease and social unrest. Today, it is clear that Governments must do more to listen to people demanding change, open new channels for dialogue and respect freedom of peaceful assembly.

On this International Day of Democracy, let us seize this pivotal moment to build a more equal, inclusive and sustainable world, with full respect for human rights.

Video link:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/evergreen/MSG+SG+Democracy+Day+15+Sept/MSG+SG+International+Democracy+Day+15+Sept+CLEAN.mp4>

**DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO PAKISTAN
AND
UNICEF
PRESS RELEASE**

**EU humanitarian aid mobilizes €5M for basic health
service provision during COVID-19**

ISLAMABAD, 14 September 2020: The European Union has mobilized €5M for UNICEF to ensure availability of basic health care services for women and children in Sindh and Balochistan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This support will be provided through the EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) department and reach over 1.25 million individuals in three districts in Sindh (Karachi East, Larkand) and Balochistan (Jafarabad).

The EU is working to strengthen Pakistan's primary healthcare system and improve resilience to emergencies and disasters. The EU's support will allow continuation of life-saving basic services and infection prevention and control measures – including increased access to water and sanitation – to mitigate the adverse impact of COVID-19.

In addition, frontline health workers will receive PPE's to continue carrying out their duties. There will also be greater efforts for community mobilization & awareness, and to increase access to safe severe acute malnutrition treatment for young children in Sindh and Balochistan during the pandemic.

Healthcare providers and frontline workers will also be trained to set up telemedicine services to increase coverage and access, and frontline workers will also receive the critical psychosocial support they require during this challenging time.

Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara said,

“Mothers and newborns are at particular risk during the pandemic. Their well-being is of paramount importance. Our support will help ensure that they continue to receive basic health services – including immunizations and nutrition treatments – in a safe environment. The EU will continue to work closely with its partners to support Pakistan’s healthcare system during this difficult time.”

This contribution to UNICEF is part of the European Union’s dedicated €150 million package for the short- and medium-term response to the COVID-19 crisis in Pakistan. This support is being extended through our development work, humanitarian aid and working with civil society organizations.

UNICEF Representative in Pakistan, Ms. Aida Girma said,

“In response to COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF is working closely with the Government of Pakistan, leading the Risk Communication and Community Engagement besides assisting the country in continuation of essential services including immunization, education, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and procurement of Personal Protective Equipment for frontline health workers.”

“We are grateful to EU and ECHO for their generous contribution to this humanitarian cause. It will not only provide an impetus to our efforts but will also help Pakistan to counter the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable women and children.”

For further details, please contact:

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Caption:

Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Pakistan, Ms. Androulla Kaminara and UNICEF Representative in Pakistan, Ms. Aida Girma exchange notes to an agreement signed between the two organisation whereby EU has mobilized €5M for UNICEF to ensure availability of basic health care services for women and children in Sindh and Balochistan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This support will be provided through the EU's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) department and reach over 1.25 million individuals in three districts in Sindh (Karachi East, Larkand) and Balochistan (Jafarabad).