



20 January 2020, Ramallah – Strong political leadership and engagement at a recent health reform workshop in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), has demonstrated further commitment towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC), to enable all Palestinians to access quality health services without financial distress.

Despite Palestine's long tradition of health insurance, people's out of pocket expenses for healthcare remain high.

“No one should get sick and die just because they're poor, or because the services they need are too far away,” said Dr Gerald Rockenschaub, WHO Head of Office. “Universal health coverage means ensuring people can get quality health services, where and when they need them – it means much more than just health insurance and health care.”

The workshop in Ramallah, hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health (MoH), was an initial consultation to discuss health financing reform (including health insurance) in further steps towards [Universal Health Coverage](#) for all. It follows a [high-level mission in August 2019](#), which made 14 strategic recommendations to strengthen Palestine's health system capacities with an emphasis on health service delivery and sustainable financing.



At the workshop, the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Health, Dr Mai Al Kaila (pictured), stressed the Government's commitment to achieve Universal Health Coverage and emphasised the Ministry is already taking measures in this direction. WHO welcomed the Government's continued commitment and strong partner engagement and Dr Rockenschaub stressed the importance of ongoing policy dialogue and political leadership to help achieve UHC.

Senior experts from WHO locally and globally facilitated the dialogue among a wide range of partners on [health financing](#) reform recommendations in presence of the Prime Minister's Office, NGOs, donors, human rights organisations, Policy Forum, the Palestinian Institute of Public Health and representatives from the East Jerusalem Hospital Network.

Dr Awad Mataria, Director of Universal Health Coverage and Health Systems at WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, presented the current context of health financing stressing, highlighting the challenges and the need to strengthen the system, while Dr Agnès Soucat, Director Health Systems Governance and Financing, discussed recommendations and appropriate examples Palestine can follow to ensure reform and progress towards UHC.

Following this workshop, WHO will develop an action plan and a road map with an implementation outline of the identified priority actions described in the 14 recommendations.

WHO will continue to support the Ministry of Health and all health partners in ongoing policy dialogue and technical support to achieve UHC as a means to promote the human right to health for all Palestinians.

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