14 May 2020, Kuwait City – The United Nations in Kuwait and the Kuwait Foreign Ministry hosted a UN talk to further highlight the ongoing impact of COVID-19 and global humanitarian response efforts.

“Today’s virtual event was a unique opportunity for experts in their fields to speak collaboratively on what has fast become one of the greatest challenges of our time,” said Dr Tarek El-Sheikh, the United Nations Resident Coordinator to Kuwait. “This virus knows no borders. We are only as strong as the weakest health system and countries need to look beyond their own borders in tackling this.”

“Extraordinary measures are needed. It can’t be business as usual,” said Ambassador Naser Alhayen, Kuwait’s Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Affairs. “We must come together in both solidarity and self-interest to respond to this crisis.”

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 4 million cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed worldwide and nearly 300,000 deaths. Experts believe the most devastating and destabilizing effects will be felt in the world’s poorest countries, where there is already evidence of incomes plummeting, jobs disappearing, food supplies falling and prices soaring, and children missing vaccinations and meals. Unless urgent action is taken now, the plight of those most vulnerable, including refugees and those fleeing conflict and persecution, will likely worsen.

“If wealthy countries with strong health systems are buckling under the pressure of COVID-19 outbreaks, imagine what will happen in countries in the midst of deep humanitarian crises due to war, natural disasters and climate change,” Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and one of the speakers at today’s event said.

On 7 May, the UN launched its updated COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), a $6.7 billion appeal to protect millions of lives and stem the spread of coronavirus in fragile countries. The COVID-19 GHRP is the international community’s primary fundraising vehicle to respond to the humanitarian impacts of the virus in low- and middle-income countries and support their efforts to fight it.

“It is worth mentioning that today coincides with the fifty-seventh anniversary since the State of Kuwait joined the United Nations. We take this opportunity to congratulate the Kuwait Leadership for a solid and lifelong partnership in peacebuilding, humanitarian support, development, and friendship for the United Nations which celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary since its creation, this year,” Dr Tarek El-Sheikh noted.

Today’s event was organized by the Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) within the UN Resident Coordinator Office UN75-57 Kuwait series, in collaboration with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the WHO, and in partnership with KRCS and the European Union Delegation in Kuwait.

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