UNITED NATIONS LAUNCHES EUROPEAN UNION/SWITZERLAND-FUNDED HUMANITARIAN FLIGHTS, WITH FIRST ROTATION DELIVERING 10,000 UNICEF COVID-19 TEST KITS

As international commercial flights remain temporarily suspended as part of the measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19, the World Food Programme (WFP), on behalf of the United Nations in Myanmar, is launching a series of humanitarian flights linking Yangon and Kuala Lumpur to bring in humanitarian cargo and personnel.

The first humanitarian flight saw the arrival of 10,000 COVID-19 test kits, the first batch of 20,000 kits, reagents and viral transport medium that United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has procured as part of its ongoing support to the efforts of Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) to scale up testing capacity and fight against the pandemic.

Generous financial support from the European Union and Switzerland has made it possible for WFP to establish the first stage of the humanitarian flight service linking Yangon with Kuala Lumpur on a weekly basis. Each flight can bring to Myanmar up to two metric tons of humanitarian cargo, in addition to personnel of the UN and international humanitarian and development partners.

“WFP is proud to do its part to support key logistical aspects of the international community’s response to COVID-19 in Myanmar,” said WFP Myanmar’s Country Director, Mr. Stephen Anderson. “These flights will speed up import of vital medical supplies and equipment in support of the government’s efforts to combat this pandemic. They also help the movement of relief workers,” said Mr. Anderson.

The first batch of test kits are handed over to MoHS to boost the testing capacity of the National Health Laboratory and help meet the increasing testing needs. The second batch is expected to arrive before June 2020.

“Laboratory testing of suspected COVID-19 cases and tracing of contacts is a key strategy to implement effective containment and treatment measures,” said Ms. June Kunugi, UNICEF Representative to Myanmar. “The delivery of test kits would not be possible without the relief flights that are being coordinated by WFP and the generous funding support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance,” added Ms. Kunugi.

“I am proud to see how United Nations in Myanmar is coming together to mount a collective effort to support the Government and contain the spread of this disease,” said the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar, Mr. Ola Almgren. “I would like to thank the European Union and Switzerland for making this possible as well as WFP and UNICEF and all agencies involved in our joint response to this pandemic, under the technical leadership of the World Health Organization,” said Mr. Almgren.

“I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to all donors and Member States for their financial support through the United Nations,” said the UN Resident Coordinator. “Today, we are witnessing what togetherness and solidarity can bring in our joint battle against this common enemy,” noted Mr. Almgren. “We are in this together, and we will get through this together.”
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