15 March 2017 | GENEVA - This week the conflict in Syria enters its seventh year. Over the past 6 years access to health services for the civilian population in the country has seriously deteriorated. More than half of public hospitals and primary health centres in Syria have either closed or are only partially functioning. Almost two-thirds of health care workers have fled. Many health care facilities that are open lack clean water, electricity, and sufficient medical and surgical supplies.

Accessing functioning health facilities has become a challenge for most people in Syria, regardless of where they live. In spite of the current ceasefire, the World Health Organization and its partners have not yet been able to regularly access communities in hard-to-reach areas. In addition, the latest data indicate that in 2016 more than two-thirds of attacks on health care settings globally occurred in Syria.

According to Dr Peter Salama, Executive Director of WHO's Health Emergencies Programme, "Substantial health needs in Syria continue to be unmet and resources to support the health workforce and health system are stretched to the limit." Many barriers to access remain, including security threats for health care workers and availability of medicines, supplies, and equipment. "On this sad anniversary of the start of war in Syria and before more lives are lost, WHO calls for systematic and unhindered access to all areas to deliver life-saving medicines, vaccines and medical supplies."

Despite the obstacles, WHO has continued to support health services with medicines and supplies, through training of remaining health staff, through medical teams and mobile clinics through cross line and cross-border programmes.

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/syria-six-years/en/