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The EU, WHO and Ministry of Health presented the joint project results on improving mother and child health in Kazakhstan

ASTANA – Today the European Union (EU), World Health Organization (WHO) and the Kazakh Ministry of Health (MoH) presented the achievements of the two-year project “Support for Maternal and Child Health in Kazakhstan”. As a result of the project, effective perinatal technologies were introduced in three pilot regions of Kazakhstan and the quality of health services significantly increased.

"The implemented project was an essential part of the EU-Kazakhstan health care programme with overall budget of 4.5 million Euro. Results of the current project displays that Kazakhstan should indeed be able to decrease maternal and child mortality rates in close future," – said Mr Norbert Jousten, the Head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan.

Ministry of Health stressed that results of the current project is going to be implemented in National Programme "Salamatty Kazakhstan". Erik Baizhunussov, Vice Minister of Health said: *"Protecting mother and child health, increasing birth rates and reducing maternal and child mortality have been crucial strategic directions in Kazakhstan's policy development. The project made a significant contribution to improved mother and child health services, and its best practices will be sustained through "Salamatty Kazakhstan".*

The project started in July 2009 and is completed in August 2011. It's financed by the EU to the amount of EUR 1,200,000. It worked both at political and local level in Aktobe, Karaganda and South Kazakhstan pilot regions and major cities Astana and Almaty. The project provided technical assistance to MoH in fulfilling the goals of the National Programmes on Health Care Development for 2005-2010 and 2011-2015 and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 on reducing maternal and child mortality.

Melita Vujnovic, Head of the WHO Country Office in Kazakhstan reiterated: *"The key role of the WHO is to provide equal access to quality health services for all people. Strengthened mother and child health has always been an immediate priority for us."*

As a result of the project interventions, the access and the quality of services have been improved. In particular, an effective referral system for mother and newborns has been established in three pilot regions, confidential maternal mortality and morbidity audit introduced at the national level and its first report developed, service delivery for mothers and under-five children has been improved and the quality of care at selected maternities and pediatric hospitals strengthened. For a quality staffing, an in-service training strategy and a roster of national experts have been developed. As a next step, an acquired positive experience will be used as a benchmark and extended to the rest of the country. This is supported within the National Programme for Health Care Development “Salamatty Kazakhstan” for 2011-2015.

Meeting participants represented Presidential Administration, Ministries of Health, Education, Foreign Affairs, Labour, Internal Affairs, as well as international organizations and local NGOs. Vice Minister of Health Dr Erik Baizhunussov, UN Resident Coordinator Stephen Tull, Head of the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan Ambassador Norbert Jousten, Head of the WHO Country Office in Kazakhstan Melita Vujnovic made opening remarks. Vivian Barnekow and Aigul Kuttumuratova, technical experts from the WHO Regional Office for Europe provided technical inputs.

Vivian Barnekow, Programme Manager from the WHO Regional Office for Europe concluded: *“The results obtained by the project during these two years are even better than what we had hoped for. The political support at all levels has been essential. In future, the Kazakhstan project will be used as a model for other countries.”*

For further information on the WHO/EU project please contact:

- Ms **Assel Mussagaliyeva**, WHO National Professional Officer, Health Systems, tel. +7 7172 592550 (ext 2131), email asm@euro.who.int or Ms Adilya Tugel, Press and Information Assistant, the EU Delegation to Kazakhstan, tel. +7 (7172) 97-11-49, e-mail: Adilya.Tugel@ext.eeas.europa.eu

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