The UAE: Humanitarian Assistance During the COVID-19 Pandemic

UAE Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Humanitarian Assistance

Even as it takes aggressive action at home to fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the UAE is helping other countries respond to the pandemic. The UAE has delivered critical medical supplies, made UAE-owned facilities available to national governments, supplied donations to local initiatives, and assisted in the repatriation of foreign nationals.

To date, the UAE has responded to the COVID-19 crisis by providing approximately 130 metric tons of aid to 13 countries in need, supporting more than 100,000 medical professionals in the process.

The UAE business community is supporting these urgent efforts. For example, both Etihad Airways and Emirates are bolstering their fleets of freighters to keep critical commercial goods like pharmaceuticals and medical devices moving and to assist in the delivery of international humanitarian relief assistance overseas.

United States

The UAE government and Etihad Airways worked with the US Mission to the UAE to repatriate 25 American citizens who were unable to travel due to the coronavirus outbreak. Additionally, UAE Ambassador to the US Yousef Al Otaiba met with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and conveyed a message of support and solidarity from UAE Foreign Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The UAE Embassy in Washington was an initial donor to Children’s National Hospital, which launched DC’s first drive-up/walk-up COVID-19 testing location for children and young patients. The UAE is providing charitable support to Chef José Andrés’ World Central Kitchen, which is distributing 50,000 packaged fresh meals to communities in need. The UAE Embassy is also supporting Feed the Fight, an organization distributing meals to health care workers and first responders, and Good Food Markets, which is providing groceries to Washington, DC residents in need.

Pakistan

The UAE delivered a first batch of crucial medical supplies to Pakistan on April 2. UAE Ambassador to Pakistan Hamad Alzaabi tweeted: “Our commitment for humanitarian approaches and principles to help people in delicate situation has no limits.”

Brazil

On April 1, UAE airline Emirates flew 500,000 COVID-19 test kits from China to Sao Paulo. It is the first of two special Emirates SkyCargo charters carrying medical supplies to Brazil.

Malaysia

The UAE sent medical equipment and supplies to Kuala Lumpur on March 29. Malaysian Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and UAE Ambassador to Malaysia Khalid Al Ghaith came together to share best practices in addressing the pandemic.
Serbia
The UAE donated a total of 10 tons of equipment to Belgrade on March 29. The first part of the donation from the UAE included 13,750 protective suits, 15,000 hospital suits, 500,000 gloves, 30,000 shoe protectors, 20,000 masks, and 6,000 sanitizers. Ventilators will arrive in the next delivery. The shipment was received by Serbian Minister of Defense Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Health Zlatibor Loncar, and UAE Ambassador to Serbia Mubarak Said El Dhaheri.

United Kingdom
The UAE turned ExCeL London, the capital’s largest venue for exhibitions and conferences which is wholly owned by Abu Dhabi government, into an emergency field hospital for the treatment of patients infected with COVID-19. Named the NHS Nightingale Hospital, the new facility will have a capacity of 4,000 beds and will be able to provide a comprehensive range of medical support facilities.

Seychelles
The UAE donated 11 tons of medical supplies to the Seychelles government to assist their fight against COVID-19. The humanitarian aid included coveralls, isolation gowns, gloves, masks, and other medical items. The shipment from the UAE arrived on March 25.

Iran
In collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the UAE sent an aircraft carrying 7.5 metric tons of medical supplies, as well as five WHO experts, to Iran on March 3. In a March 15 call with Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, Foreign Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan affirmed the UAE’s support to the Iranian people as they manage this crisis.

In the second supply of medical equipment to Iran on March 17, the UAE sent over 32 metric tons of critical medical supplies, including gloves and surgical masks, as well as other protective equipment. Aid to Iran was delivered with the aim of helping 15,000 healthcare workers and 100,000 people.

Commenting on the aid dispatched, Reem bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, said: “The UAE’s efforts in carrying out a second medical aid flight to Iran are consistent with our country’s founding humanitarian principles, which guide our belief that providing life-saving assistance to those experiencing distress is essential to serving the common good.”

Afghanistan
The UAE dispatched an urgent medical aid shipment to Afghanistan containing 20,000 testing units and equipment to examine thousands of people.

China
Following the initial COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, the UAE provided medical supplies, including facemasks and gloves, to China. On January 26, HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan tweeted: “We're closely following the Chinese government's efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus. We’re confident in their ability to overcome this crisis. The UAE is ready to provide all support to China and cooperate with the international community to tackle this virus.”

On March 4, as part of the UAE’s Homeland of Humanity Initiative, the UAE evacuated 215 people of different nationalities from China’s Hubei Province to the Emirates Humanitarian City in Abu Dhabi, where they received necessary medical evaluation and care.
The UAE donated 11 tons of medical supplies to Greece on March 26, consisting mostly of special coveralls for medical protection, medical gloves, and sanitizers. In a statement, Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis remarked: “The friendship and trust we share with the United Arab Emirates are dear, and especially during these difficult times the solidarity of our allies is evident—also shown through the delivery of valuable medical supplies today.”

Key Reactions

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization | Mar 17 | 
Thanks #UAE and @MohamedBinZayed for your continuing support to the #COVID19 response. Solidarity among international communities is of the utmost necessity

Randa Slim, Senior Fellow, MEI | 
#Kuwait #UAE sending supplies expressing solidarity with #Iran. wish more #GCC emulate them. Such behaviors help create goodwill & more importantly reinforce perception this is one neighborhood that must be shared by all

Tamara Qiblawi, Senior Digital Mideast Producer, CNN International | Mar 16 | 
For a 2nd time in a week, the #UAE sends medical aid to #Iran. On the weekend, FM Abdullah bin Zayed and FM Zarif spoke on the phone to discuss Iran's coronavirus outbreak. A significant, and dare I say, quite touching development.

Media clips

United Arab Emirates donates medical supplies to Greece (VIDEO) 
27 March 2020

Connect the World with Becky Anderson
17 March 2020

BBC World Service Radio
17 March 2020

In pictures: UAE sends second batch of medical aid to Iran
17 March 2020