PRESS RELEASE

ALARMING DISRUPTION OF HEALTH CARE DELIVERY IN GREECE

Doctors of the World Steps Up Programs to Meet Dire Needs of Greek Citizens

NEW YORK, NEW YORK (SEPTEMBER 25, 2012)—Greece's health care system and citizens are suffering as a result of austerity measures put in place to respond to the country's ongoing economic crisis.

Public health spending has been cut by 25% ($12 billion), pushing the health care system to the brink.

No longer are migrants the only ones desperate for care – there are many newly poor, unemployed, and elderly people who can no longer get the services or medicines they were able to access in the past. Even priority patients, such as pregnant women and children, are failing to receive the care they require.

Dr. Nikitas Kanakis, President of **Doctors of the World Greece**, which runs health clinics and mobile units around the country, says the organization has seen a huge increase in the number of people looking for assistance, and that the number of Greek citizens visiting its polyclinics doubled between 2010 and 2011.

Dr. Kanakis says, "**Doctors of the World Greece** has found itself facing an unthinkable situation. We are being asked to enhance our capacity and reach new vulnerable populations, and while we cannot replace the State, we are indeed here to help the people. As we cope with vastly increased demands, we view our actions as coming out of humanitarian solidarity and compassion, rather than pity."

To help respond to the increase in demand for services, Doctors of the World has increased its number of free drop-in polyclinics and mobile medical units.

Five polyclinics are now in full operation in Athens, Thessaloniki, Chania, Piraeus-Perama and Patras. Teams of doctors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists provide primary care and medicines, as well as psychological support for those unable to access the public health care system. In the polyclinic in Athens alone, Doctors of the World provides medical care to an average of 150 people per day.

Doctors of the World Greece has also set up eight mobile medical units to provide primary care to those with limited or no access to medical services. These projects include: LITO- a child healthcare and dental unit that travels to remote regions; IRIS- an ophthalmic unit caring for

elderly patients and children in remote regions; and ROMA- providing medical, pharmaceutical and psychosocial support to Roma people living in camps as well as vaccinations for children.

On the streets of Athens, **Doctors of the World Greece** offers HIV and hepatitis testing, primary healthcare, and psychological support to drug users.

Two new projects aimed at helping the homeless have been implemented. Staffed by volunteer health and social workers, a mobile unit in Athens provides services to the homeless that include bringing them essential supplies and offering primary health care. Additionally, psychologists go out into the streets to meet the homeless where they live.

The organization has also begun a new project for the elderly, in recognition of their specific health needs, in which staff provides nutritional packs, seasonal flu vaccinations, and home visits as needed.

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About Doctors of the World:

Doctors of the World, also known around the world by its French name Médecins du Monde (MdM), is an international humanitarian organization providing medical care and psychological support to vulnerable populations affected by war, natural disasters, disease, famine, poverty, or exclusion. Guided by the belief that health is a basic human right for everyone, Doctors of the World has been treating the most vulnerable and underserved populations for the past 30 years and has projects running in 76 countries worldwide. Faithful to the humanitarian principle of impartiality, the organization remains independent and apolitical.

To learn more about **Doctors of the World**, visit **www.doctorsoftheworld.org**.