Khartoum, 11 September 2019 – The World Health Organization (WHO) is working closely with national health authorities and partners to respond to cases of cholera in Blue Nile State in south-eastern Sudan.

Between 28 August and 10 September, Sudan's Federal Ministry of Health reported at least 51 cases of acute watery diarrhoea in Blue Nile State, including at least 3 deaths. Samples taken from 6 patients and sent for analysis to the Ministry's National Public Health Laboratory showed that 4 of the 6 samples tested positive for Vibrio cholerae.

"Due to suboptimal health conditions and poor safe water and sewage system structures, exacerbated by polluted water sources caused by recent floods, there is a risk of cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases spreading if no immediate response interventions take place," said Dr Naeema Al Gasseer, WHO Representative in Sudan.

To monitor and contain the outbreak, WHO has surged a team of public health experts to Blue Nile State; other international experts will soon follow. The WHO team is working with health authorities to strengthen disease surveillance, provide medical treatment for patients, distribute laboratory supplies, monitor water quality and chlorinate public water supplies, and promote health education and hygiene among affected and at-risk communities. Two cholera treatment centres are treating patients in Blue Nile State, and a dedicated isolation centre has been established for cholera case management. To date, 30 patients have been discharged after receiving treatment.

Early and effective response is the best means to stopping an outbreak in its tracks. Given the timely recognition of the cholera cases by the Federal Ministry of Health with full transparency in reporting to WHO under the International Health Regulations, and the swift scale-up of response, we are hopeful that we can soon contain this disease and minimize the number of cases," added Dr Al-Gasseer.