6 May 2016, Tunis, Tunisia -- WHO expresses great concern over the death of 12 newborns in the Sabah Medical Centre neonatal intensive care unit in Sabha, southern Libya. The deaths occurred as a result of a bacterial infection and lack of specialized health staff to provide medical care.

“These tragic deaths occurred as a result of easily preventable causes, and point to the major breakdown of the health system in Libya. The Sabah Medical Centre is the only centre of its kind providing neonatal care units in the whole of southern Libya. If urgent action is not taken, further loss of life is feared, particularly among the most vulnerable populations,” said WHO Representative to Libya Dr Jaffar Hussain Syed.

An already weakened health care system in Libya is on the brink of collapse due to critical shortages in health care workers and medicines, leaving almost 1.9 million people in need of health services.

WHO urges the Government of Libya and the international community to support the health component of Libya’s Humanitarian Response Plan. This support will allow WHO and partners to strengthen life-saving health interventions and mitigate unnecessary loss of life. The health cluster requires US$ 50.4 million, of which only 20% is funded to date. Of this amount, WHO requires US$ 15.2 million.