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PRESS RELEASE

Syria crisis: More emergency humanitarian aid for Lebanon and the region as the EU responds to escalating needs

At the end of her two-day visit to Lebanon on 13 May and during a press conference at the Delegation of the European Union, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva, announced an additional €65 million in response to the rapidly growing scale of the humanitarian crisis resulting from the conflict in Syria. **€20 million will be allocated to Lebanon to address the needs of Syrian refugees, Palestinians from Syria as well as the most vulnerable people in the Lebanese villages and towns they are living in.** With more intense fighting in Syria and just three months after pledging €100 million at the Kuwait donors conference, the European Commission is stepping up its effort to fund aid agencies because of the scale of the emergency.

"The pain and suffering of the Syrian people is almost beyond imagination," said Kristalina Georgieva, the Humanitarian Aid Commissioner. "The situation gets worse by the day. So many have now lost their homes, their families and endured immense physical and emotional hardship. And there seems to be no end in sight. Haunted by their fight for survival, I have spoken with many people, parents, children today in the Beqaa, shocked yet encouraged by their stories. At the same time, the Lebanese people and authorities should be commended for keeping their borders open despite the serious impact it has on their country's economy, helping those in need", the Commissioner added. "Violence, insecurity and the fight for survival now overwhelm the daily lives of millions of people. Europe has and will continue to help those affected, and this new funding will provide at least some respite to the victims of this terrible conflict. But unless all those involved in the fighting as well as the international community find a political solution to the violence very soon the humanitarian community will simply be unable to cope with the unprecedented scale of the needs – we are already at breaking point", the Commissioner underlined.

The additional funding will also be spent inside Syria, to assist the more than four million people who have been forced to flee their homes, and in neighbouring countries that have generously welcomed some 1.4 million refugees. Emergency healthcare services will be provided as well as shelter, food, water, sanitation and basic household items. These services will be provided by the Commission's humanitarian partners including UN Agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent family and International Non-Government Organisations.

In Lebanon the funding will allow to continue providing emergency assistance such as food, shelter, distributions of basic household and hygiene items as well as basic health care and protection services including for refugees victims of sexual violence.

While the Commission is determined to do its utmost to continue to meet the spiralling needs of the crisis it calls on all countries that have made pledges of financial aid to urgently honour them.

It also demands that all parties to the conflict cease attacks on humanitarians trying to serve the Syrian civilian population and to comply fully with international humanitarian law. Attacks against civilians, including humanitarian workers, are totally unacceptable and must stop.

BACKGROUND

Humanitarian situation

In Syria, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate at a dramatic rate, with violence intensifying and spreading throughout the entire country.

The United Nations estimates that 6.8 million people are affected by the on-going violence, with 4.25 million people internally displaced within Syria. Every day of violence adds to this number.

Aid agencies face ever greater constraints in reaching people in need. The escalating violence in the country is making it harder and more dangerous for humanitarian workers to do their jobs.

Emergency needs, especially for medical assistance, have increased in the country. Treating and evacuating the wounded, as well as shelter and food assistance are the main priorities. There is restricted access to basic services in areas affected by fighting and civilians attempting to flee from the fighting need urgent life-saving assistance and protection, including food, shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene aid. Beyond emergency needs, shortages of all kinds are affecting the civilian population, including growing fuel scarcity.

In neighbouring countries, the number of refugees more than doubled during the first three months of 2013 and there are now over 1.4 million, registered and awaiting registration, in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa. This number is continuing to rise as hostilities grow – there are 200,000 new refugees every month, or 7,000 every day. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees projects a total of 3.5 million refugees from Syria by the end of 2013. Countries bordering Syria are approaching a dangerous saturation point and they need urgent support to continue keeping borders open and assisting refugees.

Funding

Before this new funding allocation, the **European Commission** was already spending **€200 million** in humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighbouring countries. The current breakdown of EU humanitarian funding is 49% inside Syria with the rest distributed between Jordan, Lebanon (23%), Turkey and Iraq.

A further **€193 million** has also been provided through other EU instruments, in response to the Syria crisis (in areas including education, support to host communities and local societies).

The Commission's humanitarian aid is channelled through mandated and professional humanitarian organisations in accordance with humanitarian principles provided to all those in need, irrespective of their creed or political affiliation.

European Union Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom) have also mobilised substantial humanitarian funding of over **€361 million**, which will increase once the funding pledged at the Kuwait Donors Conference is fully committed.

Austria, France, Hungary, Sweden, Italy, Slovakia and Norway, participating States in the European Civil Protection Mechanism, also responded to an appeal launched by the European Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) for in-kind and financial assistance for Syrians who have fled to Turkey and to Jordan. This came in response to requests from the respective authorities to the Commission confirming that they accepted the "burden-sharing

proposals of the international community" and providing details of the type of assistance required for Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan.

There is still a large funding gap between the UN appeal and real contributions: only half of the \$1.5 billion funding pledged in January at the Donors Conference in Kuwait has been given. International donors in general, and in particular those in the region, need to increase their funding.

For more information

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

& in Arabic: <http://echo-arabic.eu>

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

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