Statement by Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides on the humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta (Syria)

Brussels, 18 December 2017

Over the past weeks, the situation in the besieged Syrian enclave of Eastern Ghouta near Damascus has deteriorated rapidly. Its 400,000 inhabitants face major humanitarian challenges, as there is a shortage of basic supplies including food, fuel, medicine. This is leading to severe malnutrition, medical emergencies, and an increased risk of diseases, such as typhoid and hepatitis. Around 500 people, including 137 children, require urgent medical evacuation.

In order to help those in need, I strongly urge for the immediate granting of sustained and unhindered access for aid deliveries and medical evacuations. We must not allow for civilians to be taken hostage by the conflict in Syria.

I call on all parties to the conflict to make the protection of civilians their utmost priority. This is not only a moral obligation, but also a clear obligation under international humanitarian law.

The European Union will continue to provide aid wherever it is needed in Syria. But only a political solution can bring an end to this suffering. We continue to fully support the UN-led process for a negotiated political solution as the basis for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political transition to end the conflict in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

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Press contacts:

Carlos MARTIN RUIZ DE GORDEJUELA (+32 2 296 53 22)
Daniel PUGLISI (+32 2 296 91 40)

General public inquiries: Europe Direct by phone 00 800 67 89 10 11 or by email