European Commission - Speech

UNGA High Level Meeting on Syria

Brussels, 26 September 2018

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished members of the panel,

Dear colleagues,

Dear friends,

Thank you for being here today.

Eight (8) years after the beginning of the conflict, Syria remains **an open humanitarian wound**.

Each new escalation triggers tremendous humanitarian needs and human suffering. The war is far from over, and a political solution is more urgent than ever.

Today our eyes are now on Idlib. Close to three (3) million people need immediate humanitarian assistance. Right now.

We must do everything in our power to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Idlib. Of course we are fully mobilised with contingency planning. And we have strengthened our preparedness.

But our efforts will be wasted without humanitarian access. Most importantly, we must never give up on those seeking a political solution.

Protection of civilians is our biggest humanitarian challenge. Especially, inside Syria.

- The millions of civilians in hard to reach areas.
- The civilian infrastructure (schools, hospitals) which is targeted on a regular basis.
- The millions of internally displaced and their hosts.

Access is our biggest challenge.

For aid workers operating Syria. Unfortunately, humanitarian workers and assets are constantly under attack.

Regions in Syria change hands, but humanitarian needs remain the same. I want to be clear on this. We cannot afford a **humanitarian vacuum** in the country.

All parties to the conflict must respect International Humanitarian Law. They **MUST** protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. And, of course, allow aid workers to do their job. In security and in safety.

Dear colleagues,

Protection our number one challenge. Not only in Syria. But across the region.

This is particularly true in countries hosting more than **five and half (5.5) million Syrian refugees:** Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. They are the pillars of the humanitarian response to the conflict in Syria.

Without an inclusive, viable political solution, displacement and suffering will continue.

Our top priority is to cover the pressing needs of thirteen (13) million affected people inside Syria. We must continue delivering aid with humanity. Impartiality. Neutrality. And independence.

It is vital that we **all** remain at the forefront of the humanitarian response in Syria. And the wider region

And it is essential that we **all** stay on the track of the Brussels Conferences in 2017 and 2018.

Honouring our humanitarian commitments. And translating our promises into real, concrete solidarity, so desperately needed by millions of innocent Syrians.

Thank you.

SPEECH/18/3917