EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Brussels, 16 January 2013

Statement by Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria

"*I am appalled by the deteriorating situation in Syria and its effect on the suffering people of that country. Over the past weeks, fighting has increased and the conflict is spreading even further. Prices of basic commodities like bread and fuel have sky-rocketed. Bad weather, including torrential rain, snow and freezing temperatures, is taking a terrible toll on the two million displaced people in Syria and on the 623,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries. With no political solution yet in sight I fear the worst is still to come.*

It is crucial in this corroding situation, that the international community stays strong in its commitment and that it continues to give generously to assist the growing tide of desperate Syrians.

Thankfully neighbouring countries have been keeping their borders open to the refugees and giving sanctuary to the increasing number of women, children and men. The EU, as the largest donor to the Syrian crisis, will staunchly continue to share this burden with the affected populations. We also will strive to open up more channels for delivering assistance inside Syria, where the most dramatic needs are. Once again, I strongly appeal to the Syrian Authorities to allow more international humanitarian relief workers into the country to enable aid to reach all affected areas. I also reiterate my plea for all sides to respect International Humanitarian Law."

Background

The humanitarian situation has deteriorated dramatically in the last weeks as in addition to the increasing violence the harsh winter with low temperatures, rain and now snow hampers aid efforts. An estimated 4 million people are affected by the violence. By UN estimates, at least 2 million have been internally displaced in Syria. There are now more than 623,000 refugees registered or awaiting registration in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and North Africa. Every day of violence adds to these numbers.

The escalating violence and increased insecurity in the country is making it harder and more dangerous for humanitarian workers to do their jobs. Attacks on humanitarian workers continue. So far, seven Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers and eight UN staff members have been killed doing their humanitarian work, and ambulances and UN vehicles are still being attacked. Seventeen attacks on relief trucks of the World Food Program have been reported so far.

Emergency needs such as medical and food assistance, shelter and winterization have increased in the country. Treating and evacuating the wounded are priorities. Civilians attempting to flee the fighting need urgent assistance and protection. Beyond emergency needs, shortages of all kinds are affecting the civilian population, including growing fuel shortages.

All parties must comply with international humanitarian law to protect civilians and make access possible. Attacks against civilians, including humanitarian workers, are inhumane, illegal and must stop. The Commission is in daily contact with its humanitarian partners and is coordinating its humanitarian activities with EU Member States and all other significant donors.

Our priorities are to give aid to the displaced people in Syria and to give adequate assistance to the Syrian refugees hosted in other countries.

Funding

So far the European Commission has allocated almost €150 million in humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighbouring states, with an additional €6 million allocated to Iraqi refugees based in Syria and €3.3 million to Palestinians in Lebanon. The total EU contribution (EU plus Member States) now reaches more than €358.5 million. Other funding instruments of the European Union have mobilised €85 million in response to the Syrian crisis.

At this stage, the breakdown of EU humanitarian funding is 45% inside Syria and the rest distributed between Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

European Union Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom) have also mobilised humanitarian funding of over €208 million.

Eight EU countries and Norway have also provided assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, after an appeal launched by the Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre for aid to Syrian refugees in Turkey and Jordan.

For more information

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

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

Arabic website of European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://echo-arabic.eu

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

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

Commissioner Georgieva's Twitter and Facebook account:

https://twitter.com/kgeorgievaeu

http://www.facebook.com/KristalinaGeorgieva