Foreign Minister Maas before the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in Zagreb on the situation in Syria and at the Turkish-Greek border

2020-03-05

Foreign Minister

Heiko Maas

issued the following statement today (5 March) before flying to Zagreb for the meeting of

EU

Foreign Ministers:

Our talks in Zagreb will focus on the situation in Syria. Europe can and must do more to bring the fighting to an end and to ensure that the population has sufficient supplies. The scale of the humanitarian disaster in Idlib is dramatic.

In talks with the United Nations, we offered to provide a further 100 million euros to help ensure that those in need in Idlib have shelter and supplies. However, this is contingent upon clear conditions: humanitarian access and the protection of aid workers and the population must be guaranteed. It is crucial that Russia and Turkey create the parameters for this in Moscow today. What we need now is an immediate ceasefire and the securing of supplies for the one million internally displaced persons. Russia must put pressure on the Assad regime to finally halt the attacks on hospitals and schools. Relief organisations must continue to have access across borders to those in need.

Naturally, we will also discuss the refugee situation at the

EU’s

external borders. It is important now that we do not leave Greece to cope on its own but that we find a united European response to the situation at the Turkish-Greek border. As always, it is the weakest who are suffering most in the current situation. That is why we have to do everything we can to provide swift assistance to vulnerable children in particular.

We firmly believe that the

EU

must continue to provide assistance, also increased financial support, for Turkey’s efforts to host refugees and migrants. For Turkey is the world’s largest host country for refugees and a fair distribution of the burden is also in our interest. However, it goes without saying that in return we expect Turkey to adhere to the

EU

-Turkey Statement.

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