Joint Statement by the High Representative/ Vice-President Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on the situation in Syria

Brussels, 13 January 2020

The European Union welcomes the decision by the United Nations Security Council on 10 January to extend the authorization for cross-border humanitarian assistance to people in need in Syria. In light of the huge humanitarian needs in northern Syria, failure by the Council to agree on an extension would have had catastrophic consequences. However, the EU regrets the exclusion from the scope of UN Security Council Resolution 2504 of the Yaroubia crossing point between Iraq and northeast Syria, where unmet needs persist on a large scale. This jeopardizes the delivery of critical medicine and medical equipment to northeast Syria. The European Union also regrets the reduced timeframe of the resolution. Meeting acute humanitarian needs requires sustained and predictable access beyond six months.

The escalation of hostilities in northwest Syria, ongoing violence and violations of international humanitarian law continue to dramatically affect civilians who have already suffered years of conflict.

Numerous civilian deaths and injuries have been reported in recent weeks. Some 300,000 people, the overwhelming majority of them women and children, have been displaced since the beginning of December in appalling conditions. More than four million people are facing a harsh winter, including hundreds of thousands of people living in tents and makeshift camps or sites for internally displaced people. The continuous military operations further aggravate this already dramatic humanitarian situation.

The European Union continues to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable civilians in Syria, including in the northwest. It urges all parties involved in the conflict to observe an immediate ceasefire, ensure the protection of civilians, allow for unimpeded humanitarian access irrespective of political considerations, and fully respect international humanitarian law.

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