Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

The UK in support of the 2013 Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan launched in Geneva

2013-06-07

Thank you Madam Chair,

Thank you for being here today and thank you also to your colleagues on the podium for their briefings and through you and them may I thank your teams who do such important work on the ground.

Today you described an increasingly brutal situation. In addition to the Commission of Inquiry (

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) excerpts that you cited on chemical warfare and thermobaric bombs, we have also in recent days seen the massacre at Al Qusayr, the attack on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force and the dangerous import of foreign fighters.

Each day that the brutality continues it becomes even clearer that there can be no military solution to the Syria crisis. Only a political settlement can offer a way forward. That is why the UK strongly supports the proposal for a Geneva II conference and hope that it can be convened soon.

At the same time, your briefings today have underscored how important it is to have a parallel track on humanitarian access, protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law. We have heard powerful messages today about the human and long-term cost of the crisis, in Syria and to her neighbours. We thank the neighbours for the intensive support they give and I'd like to make clear the UK's solidarity with the neighbours in this.

Madam Chair, I listened carefully to the Syrian representative but I listened with a mounting sense of disbelief.

It is the Syrian people who bear the major brunt of the conflict; it is the Syrian government who bear the major responsibility for it. It is good to hear the Syrian representative say that his government is a friend of the UN: they can show it by granting full access for humanitarian agencies and relief, granting full access for the

COI

, showing respect for International Humanitarian Law, and protecting civilians not targeting them, as we have heard today and in the Human Rights Council.

Madam Chair, the UK welcomes the plans we've heard from you and your colleagues today for a scaled-up effort in Syria and the region. The UK has been in the forefront of the humanitarian response in Syria and the region. We have committed over $200m to date which has helped provide food, medicine and shelter to hundreds of thousands of people. Now, we will be looking at how best

to support your new appeal in the weeks and months ahead. We recognise the need for a longer-term humanitarian response that engages with development actors and neighbouring countries as well.

We believe that donors need to provide more flexible, longer-term humanitarian funding as well as development support to help Syria's neighbours – and we have heard eloquently from them today – deal with the enormous strains caused by the crisis.

I would like to use this opportunity to encourage all colleagues here to step up with long-term future funding, not only for the immediate humanitarian assistance, but to provide structural support for host communities in neighbouring countries and for the eventual reconstruction of Syria.

Finally, Madam Chair, given the criticality of humanitarian access, I would like to ask about the possibility of having a similar dialogue involving the Syrian opposition

Thank you

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-uk-in-support-of-the-2013-syria-humanitarian-assistance-response-plan-launched-in-geneva