EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Brussels, 18 December 2013

Aid Principals calling for decisive action to increase humanitarian access and funding for Syria crisis

Statement by Kristalina Georgieva, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Valerie Amos, UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director UN World Food Programme, Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Anthony Lake, Executive Director UN Children's Fund.

The Syria conflict has become the greatest humanitarian tragedy of our times. The suffering of the Syrian people is immense. 9.3 million Syrians are in need of assistance, the number of those who are internally displaced has grown to 6.5 million and there are more than 2.2 million refugees who have fled their country. Half of those affected are children, the most innocent and vulnerable of all.

The United Nations' sixth revised appeal for Syria and the neighbouring countries launched two days ago is the largest UN appeal ever and reflects the staggering scale of humanitarian needs. We truly fear the worst as another harsh winter brings nearer the risk of even greater suffering among people already severely tested by two and a half years of deprivation.

We call on the international community to continue to rally to the aid of the Syrian people, as well as the neighbouring countries which through their generosity and solidarity are bearing an immense burden.

It is our sincerest wish that the Geneva II Conference on 22 January 2014 will bring about a political solution and an end to the Syrian war.

Irrespective of this hoped-for outcome, we call on all parties to ensure the safety and protection of each and every civilian, and remind them of the absolute necessity to fully respect International Humanitarian Law.

We call on all parties to the conflict to respect and not to abuse the delivery of humanitarian aid. All those engaged in fighting bear a heavy responsibility to address humanitarian concerns as a matter of absolute priority. With the increasing needs inside and outside Syria, we urge all the parties to the conflict to ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian organisations throughout the country. A humanitarian cease-fire would allow aid convoys to deliver assistance to communities which remain out of our reach.

We reiterate that humanitarian aid is being and will continue to be channelled in a way which fully respects the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality. It should not be made a hostage of military or political considerations. The suffering of the Syrian people must end.