European External Action Service (EEAS)

EU Statement – UN Security Council: Informal Interactive Dialogue on Syria

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21 November 2022, New York – European Union Statement at the UN Security Council Informal Interactive Dialogue on Syria

Thank you chair for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of the EU.

I will focus on three main points:

Since we met two months ago, the humanitarian situation in Syria has continued to deteriorate. This dire situation is exacerbated by three factors: i) the cholera outbreak saw a sharp increase in cases and deaths, which could soon spread to neighbouring states; ii) the security situation worsened, and clashes have led to further displacements and in some cases suspension of humanitarian assistance; ii) food and commodity prices continue to rise. [1]

To address these needs, in October the EU disbursed an additional 700.000 euros (to UNICEF and WFP) to tackle the cholera outbreak.[2] This outbreak highlights how critical water infrastructure is. This is why we have included water sanitation and hygiene as a major area for our humanitarian activities in Syria, such as repairs of WASH infrastructure in schools and small scale water system rehabilitation. To address the needs related to food insecurity, the EU has also allocated an additional 15 Million euros to the WFP. In total, in 2022, the EU has provided over 150 Million euros for humanitarian assistance in Syria.

2) The vital importance of the cross border mechanism: I would like to recall that most humanitarian assistance is currently delivered through the cross border mechanism. In 2022, over 8,000 trucks delivered aid through the cross-border mechanism, while in the same year's time, only 90 trucks have delivered aid cross-line. There is currently no alternative in place that can match the scale and scope of the UN cross-border operation. In 2022, a quarter of the EU's humanitarian budget for North West Syria was allocated to 5 UN agencies, (IOM, OCHA, UNFPA, WFP and WHO) for their cross-border work.

Let me underline that EU humanitarian assistance makes uses of all modalities to be able to deliver aid to the Syrian people, not only cross border through Bab El Awa, but also by cross-line through Damascus. While cross-line operations remain a complement, and not a

substitute, to the much larger cross-border operations, it is important to scale up this modality.

3) Early recovery: As already said many times, we believe that until the Syrian regime engages in a genuine political transition, there can be no normalisation, no lifting of sanctions and no EU funding for reconstruction. Nevertheless, even in the absence of genuine engagement by the Syrian regime towards a political solution, the EU supports early recovery activities aimed at strengthening livelihoods and income generating opportunities, predominantly in the agricultural sector, as well as access to health and education services. EU support for early recovery is and will remain aligned to the needs of the Syrian population, and our aim is to increase our work with the Syrian civil society and with local organisations to ensure this.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that the extension of the cross-border resolution beyond 6 months is instrumental to facilitate the delivery of life sustaining assistance for the 4,1 Million people in North West Syria who depend on it for their daily survival. Sustainable progress on early recovery also requires more time than just six months to plan. Uncertainty over each renewal by the UNSC has every time impacted supply chain logistics and ultimately the delivery of assistance to the population in need. We note that the volume of cross border assistance has not reached its regular level yet, due to the uncertainty related to the mechanism renewal last summer. We therefore urge all SC members to reaffirm their commitment to renew the resolution in January, for the people of Syria.

[1] WFP Syria External Situation Report, September 2022 (updated October 2022), https://www.wfp.org/publications/syria.

[2] https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/news/syria-eu-bolsters-cholera-response-through-its-humanitarian-partners-2022-10-14_en

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