EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Brussels, 3 September 2013

Statement by Kristalina Georgieva on latest figure of refugees fleeing from the Syrian crisis

"*Today it was confirmed that the number of refugees who have fled from the war in Syria into neighbouring countries has reached the appalling milestone of two million. More than half of all those refugees are children.*

The number has doubled in the short period from 16th March 2013, and has now reached this tragic figure. Trying to visualise what this means, just think of four times the number of citizens of Manchester or Lyon or just over the population of Warsaw.

Then imagine also what this sudden movement of a city-sized population means in terms of the increased pressure on resources such as education, health and security for the countries hosting the refugees.

Most of those who have had to flee Syria are concentrated in four countries; Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. It is a tragedy for those who have been forced from their homes. And it also means tremendous sacrifice for their generous hosts who are facing many challenges to their own stability as a result of the exodus from Syria.

Tragic and cruel as it is, the truth is that with violence becoming ever more ferocious, brutal and inhumane, the tide of refugees is bound to continue to rise. And increasingly the civilian population is at the eye of the target.

Once again, I call for the fighting to cease and for a political solution to be found urgently. Until that time – and it may be further from our reach than ever before - I reiterate my plea to all parties to abide by International Humanitarian Law and to protect civilians and those helping them to survive".

Spokespersons' Service
Service des Porte-parole

Background

The humanitarian situation has deteriorated dramatically in the last weeks. The escalating violence and increased insecurity in the country is making it harder and more dangerous for humanitarian workers to do their jobs. Attacks on humanitarian workers continue. So far, twenty Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers and eleven UN members have been killed doing their humanitarian work, and ambulances and UN vehicles are still being attacked.

Emergency needs such as medical and food assistance and shelter have increased in the country. Treating and evacuating the wounded is a priority. Civilians attempting to flee from the fighting need urgent assistance and protection. Beyond emergency needs, shortages of all kinds, including fuel, are affecting the civilian population

The Commission is in daily contact with its humanitarian partners and is coordinating its humanitarian activities with EU Member States and all other significant donors.

Our priorities are to give aid to displaced people in Syria and to give adequate assistance to refugees hosted by other countries.

Funding

The European Commission has, since the end of 2011 and in direct response to the crisis, mobilised €515 million in humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighbouring countries. A further €328 million has also been mobilised through other EU instruments (i.e. for education, support to host communities and local societies), bringing the total funding from the EU budget to €843 million. This includes the recent increase of €400 million through the Comprehensive package, announced on 6 June.

In addition EU Member States have provided more than €493.6 million in humanitarian aid to Syrians affected by the conflict, bringing the total EU contribution to more than **€1.3 billion.**

Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Slovakia, Norway, Austria and Luxembourg have also provided in-kind assistance through the EU's Emergency Response Centre (formally the EU Monitoring and Information Centre - MIC).

- In Syria, the European Commission's humanitarian funding provides medical emergency relief, protection, food-nutritional assistance, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and logistics services.
- Beyond the Syrian border, the funding ensures that people fleeing the country will receive life-saving assistance such as health, food, shelter, hygiene kits, water and sanitation services, and protection.
- At this stage, the breakdown of EU funding is: 47% inside Syria, 23.1% in Jordan, 24.3% in Lebanon and the rest distributed between Iraq and Turkey.

ECHO funding is channelled through the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, various INGOs and UN humanitarian agencies, including UNHCR and those whose mandate focuses on the protection and assistance of women and children, such as UNICEF, UNFPA and Save the Children.

For more information

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

Arabic website of European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://echo-arabic.eu

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

Commissioner Georgieva's Twitter and Facebook account:

https://twitter.com/kgeorgievaeu

http://www.facebook.com/KristalinaGeorgieva

Factsheet on Syria Crisis:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf