The EU and the crisis in Syria

Brussels, 5 April 2017

The war in Syria, one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has faced since World War II, continues to have devastating and tragic consequences for its people. It is also having an increasingly destabilising impact on the wider region, through the displacement of people, the spread of terrorism, the exacerbation of political and sectarian differences.

There can be no military solution to the conflict, and the elimination of Da'esh and other UN-listed terrorist entities in Syria requires a political solution to the conflict in Syria. Therefore, the EU's strategic objectives in Syria are focused on six key areas:

(a) An end to the war through a genuine political transition, in line with UNSCR 2254, negotiated by the parties to the conflict under the auspices of the UN SpecialEnvoy for Syria and with the support of key international and regional actors,

(b) Promote a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, through support for the strengthening of the political opposition,

(c) Save lives by addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians across the country in a timely, effective, efficient and principled manner.

(d) Promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations,

(e) Promote accountability for war crimes with a view to facilitating a national reconciliation process and transitional justice,

(f) Support the resilience of the Syrian population and Syrian society.

These objectives were endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions of 3 April 2017 that, together with the Joint Communication by the High Representative and the Commission of 14 March 2017, form the **EU Strategy for Syria**, a country specific part of the EU regional strategy for Syria, Iraq and the Da'esh threat adopted in March 2015 and reviewed in May 2016.

Implementing this Regional Strategy, the EU has also stepped up its engagement, including by supporting, by non-military means, the efforts of the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh. The EU actions to counter Da'esh illustrate that the EU is fully committed to fighting terrorism, both inside and outside the European territory. The Syria and Iraq: Counter Terrorism/Foreign Fighters Strategy was endorsed at the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 20 October 2014 and the EU established an autonomous sanctions regime to target *i.a.* ISIL/Da'esh in September 2016.

The EU continues to provide support to the UN-led Geneva process through the EU regional initiative on the future of Syria, led by the High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini upon invitation by the European Council last year. The aim of the initiative is to foster political dialogue with key actors from the region in order to identify common ground on the post-conflict arrangements for Syria and examine the scope for reconciliation and reconstruction once a credible political transition is firmly under way.

The EU has called for an end to the unacceptable violence in Syria, which continues to cause the suffering of millions of Syrians and immeasurable destruction of infrastructure. Attacks on cultural heritage are also an unfortunate consequence of the conflict. The EU continues to condemn in the strongest terms the continuing violence and the widespread and systematic violations of human rights. In March 2017, the EU delivered statements at the Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic during the Human Rights Council session.

The European Union has responded decisively to the violent repression of anti-government protests in Syria which began in March 2011, by suspending its cooperation with the Syrian Government under the European Neighbourhood Policy and gradually extending restrictive measures. These measures have been targeted and include humanitarian exemptions. The EU will continue its policy

of imposing additional sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters, as long as the repression continues. In May 2016, the Council extended EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime **until 1 June 2017**. The sanctions currently in place include notably an oil embargo, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU, export restrictions on equipment and technology that might be used for internal repression, as well as on equipment and technology for monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications. In addition, 235 people and 67 entities are targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze over the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria. See the annex for an overview of sanctions in place.

The EU has been at the forefront of the work done to put Syrian chemical weapons under international control, to eventually lead to their destruction. In March 2016, the EU provided funding of 4.6 million euros to the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) special missions in the Syrian Arab Republic, including activities related to the OPCW Fact Finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism (UNSCR 2235). The fourth JIM report was published in October 2016. The EU delivered a statement in the OPCW on 7 March 2017.

The EU Delegation to Syria expatriate staff continues to operate from Beirut, carrying out regular missions to Damascus.

EU as the leading donor

The Syrian crisis is the world's worst humanitarian disaster. The EU is the leading donor in the international response to the Syrian crisis, with over **€9.4 billion** from the EU and Member States collectively allocated in humanitarian and development assistance since the start of the conflict.

Since 2011, the European Commission's support in response to the Syrian crisis has exceeded **€3.8 billion,** includingboth immediate *humanitarian* assistance, and *non-humanitarian* aid, which responds to immediate and medium-term needs.

At the 2016 London conference *Supporting Syria and the Region*, the EU and the Member States pledged over €3 billion for the year 2016 to assist people inside Syria as well as Syrian refugees and the communities hosting them in neighbouring countries.

The European Commission pledge for 2016 amounts to €1.115 billion and has been fully delivered. The Commission has also given an indicative amount for 2017 of €1.275 billion, bringing the total pledge for the two years to €2.39 billion. These funds will mostly come from humanitarian assistance and the European Neighbourhood Instrument.

Humanitarian assistance

The Commission has so far provided **€1.45 billion** *humanitarian assistance*for life-saving emergency response, food, water, emergency medical treatment, sanitation, hygiene, protection, education in emergency and shelter to millions of Syrians inside Syria and to Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.

Through our humanitarian aid inside Syria, we are reaching millions of people across the country, starting from the first line emergency response. We are helping humanitarian partners to respond to needs from the situation of early displacement.

Thanks to lifesaving humanitarian aid provided by the European Commission since the beginning of the crisis:

- Some 2 million people have gained access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene items;
- 850 000 people have received food;
- 1 million people have received essential items and shelter,
- 350 000 children have been covered by child protection programmes.

The EU also supports humanitarian partners to preposition stock and contingency planning to anticipate new population movements.

Despite this lifesaving support, humanitarian needs remain enormous: 5 million people fled the country, 6.3 million people are internally-displaced, 13.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, 4.9 million people in need trapped in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, where they are exposed to grave protection threats. In Aleppo and in other areas of the country the scale of destruction is massive; needs for basic services, protection, shelter and infrastructures are widespread in both urban and rural areas.

The EU calls for the respect of an effective ceasefire, the International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the protection of civilians, especially children, women and other vulnerable groups and for unhindered unconditioned humanitarian access to all those in need.

The EU's humanitarian aid is impartial and independent and goes to people in need regardless of ethnic or religious considerations. The EU's humanitarian aid is channelled through the United Nations, International Organisations, and international NGO partners.

Non-humanitarian assistance

The Commission has mobilised over €2.4 billion in *non-humanitarian aid,* including:

- €664 million through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) to address the medium term needs of civilians inside Syria as well as of refugees and hosting communities in the region (education, livelihoods, local governance, health, access to basic services);
- €380 million through Macro-financial Assistance (MFA) to Jordan to assist with the influx of Syrian refugees;
- €226 million through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace for assistance programmes in opposition-controlled areas in Syria, mediation efforts, transitional justice preparation and measures to reduce tensions between refugees and host communities in the region, as well as to support the destruction of Syrian chemical stockpiles and chemical threat prevention;
- €242 million through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) to Turkey;
- €26 million through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;
- €61 million through the Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI)
- €932 million channelled through the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis (including from the above mentioned instruments ENI, IPA and DCI)

Since its establishment in December 2014, most non-humanitarian aid for Syria's neighbouring countries is channelled through the **EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the 'Madad Fund' (EUTF Madad).** The EUTF aims to bring a more coherent and integrated EU response to the crisis by merging various EU financial instruments and contributions from Member States into one single flexible mechanism for quick disbursement. The Trust Fund primarily addresses longer term resilience needs of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, as well as the hosting communities and their administrations.

The mandate of the Trust Fund has been extended so that it can also operate in the Western Balkans where relevant to the flow of Syrian refugees. In the future the Trust Fund may also start financing resilience activities inside Syria and could become a funding tool for reconstruction, resettlement and governance support following a political settlement of the crisis. With contributions and pledges from 22 Member States, amounting to over €93million, and contributions from various EU instruments, the Fund has reached a **total volume of close to €1 billion to date**. Large programmes focusing on education, livelihoods, health have already been adopted by the Fund's Board for a total **of €767 million.**

So far, the EU Trust Fund has allocated €282 million to support education needs in the region (€232.7 million for primary education and €49.3 million for higher education).

The programmes aim to reach children and young people who have fled the war in Syria to take refuge in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Children and youth in host communities will also benefit. The services provided to the children include access to quality education, protective services and civic and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Furthermore, the EUTF for Syria is helping improve access to quality higher education, distributing scholarships to vulnerable and internally-displaced students in Syria, Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in the region. A total of 3,847 full scholarships, 5,741 language courses and 40,000+ counselling sessions will be provided in the coming four years allowing students to attend and complete undergraduate and master's degrees, professional courses and language classes in key sectors like nursing, pharmacy, education, engineering and business administration, among others.

Since the on-set of the Syrian crisis, substantial non-humanitarian assistance inside Syria has also been provided by the Commission through the European Neighbourhood Instrument, targeting in particular education, livelihoods and civil society support.

Thanks to this financial support, 2.3 million children have had improved access to education at primary and secondary school level (over 4,000 schools reached). Furthermore, more than 11,367 emergency job-opportunities for Syrians have been created (including 4,000 job opportunities for

women) and numerous micro-grants for small-size businesses have been provided. More than 85,000 Syrians inside Syria have benefitted from improved community-based activities thanks to the strengthening of grassroots civil society activities.

In addition, Commission funds from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights have also supported the protection of Human Rights Defenders as well as capacity-building of Syrian journalists.

Assistance inside Syria

Since the start of the conflict in 2011, the Commission has allocated more than €938.9 million in assistance to Internally Displaced Persons and vulnerable communities inside Syria (64% is humanitarian, channelled through EU humanitarian aid- €611.1 million, and non-humanitarian: ENI – €233.9 million, IcSP – €65.2 million, EIDHR – €13.7 million, DCI-Food – €15.1 million) as well as €1.6 million from the Madad Fund.

Assistance to neighbouring countries

With Syrians fleeing the conflict to neighbouring countries since the start of the crisis, these countries are now hosting an unprecedented number of refugees. The European Union is strongly supporting Syrian refugees and their host communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq.

Jordan

In **Jordan** there are over 655 000 Syrian registered refugees, half of which are children. EU leaders have met Jordan representatives and visited the country many times throughout the last five years. At the 2016 London Conference *Supporting Syria and the Region*, the EU reiterated the solidarity to Jordan pledging an increased support.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the European Commission has allocated more than **€950 million** in assistance to refugees and vulnerable communities. This includes more than €251 million from the humanitarian budget, €380 million from the Macro Financial Assistance (MFA) Instrument, over €170 million from the ENI/ European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, €118 million from the EU Trust Fund for the Syrian crisis and more than €30 million from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

The Commission's humanitarian aid has helped more than 350 000 Syrian refugees in Jordan. With 83% of the refugees in Jordan living in urban settings, the Commission supports the most vulnerable refugees through cash assistance as it is considered the most cost-efficient and dignified modality. Specific programmes support women an children's needs, since approximately 52% of these refugees are children and 51 % are women. Another priority in 2015 has been to respond to the emergency needs of asylum seekers at the border between Syria and Jordan where today more than 50 000 people remain stranded, awaiting access to Jordan.

In addition, the EU has made available, mostly through Budget Support, an average of €100 million each year in bilateral assistance (all grants) to Jordan under the European Neighbourhood policy, which brings the **overall amount to €1.55 billion.**

Lebanon

The EU pays tribute to the outstanding efforts Lebanon is making since the outset of the conflict. The country is hosting more than 1 million registered Syrian refugees representing one fourth of the Lebanese population, which is the highest per-capita concentration of refugees worldwide. At the 2016 London Conference *Supporting Syria and the Region*, the EU Commission pledge increased its support to invest in resilience and sustainability of Lebanon.

For **Lebanon**, since the beginning of the crisis, the European Commission has allocated **more than €880 million**. This includes more than €356 million in humanitarian aid and close to €512 million for development and stabilisation support. This support is mainly financed by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (close to €250 million), more than €220 million through the EU Madad Fund, and €44 million from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace to address longer term resilience needs of affected civilians. In Lebanon, through its partners, the EU's humanitarian aid reaches around 665 000 people.

This support comes on top of €219 million in regular bilateral cooperation for Lebanon under the European Neighbourhood Policy, which bring the **overall support to more than €1 billion**. This shows that the EU was able to quickly mobilise a 200% increase of funding for Lebanon to effectively address the country's huge needs resulting from the refugee crisis.

Turkey

In Turkey there are over 2.9 million registered Syrian refugees, making Turkey the largest host of refugees in the world.

EU humanitarian aid is funding the provisions of food, non-food items (including winterisation assistance), health assistance and protection through humanitarian partners. Altogether, the Commission is currently providing food assistance in Turkey to about 230,000 people and health assistance to about 130,000 people. Through the EU Children of Peace initiative, the Commission has funded emergency education, which provides Syrian children living in Turkey with access to schools.

In November 2015, the EU announced the setting up a legal framework – the **Refugee Facility for Turkey** – with **€3 billion** to deliver efficient and complementary support to Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey. Priority will be given to actions providing immediate humanitarian, development and other assistance to refugees and host communities, national and local authorities in managing and addressing the consequences of the inflows of refugees. €2.15 billion has been allocated, for both humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance. Of this, €1,5 billion has been contracted and €777 million has been disbursed. Last September the European Commission signed two direct grants worth €600 million to support Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey in the crucial areas of education and health. Moreover €348 million were contracted for the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), which is the largest ever humanitarian programme using direct cash-transfers to cover the everyday needs of the most vulnerable refugee families in Turkey.

Iraq

Closely linked to the Syria crisis is the crisis in Iraq. The Iraq crisis –like Syria - is a UN Level-3 emergency with over 10 million people in need of humanitarian aid, in a country of 36 million. This includes 3.3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 239 000 refugees from Syria.

The European Commission is stepping up its humanitarian assistance to help the most vulnerable in Iraq. The initial allocation for 2017 of €42.5 million comes on top of over €159 million in humanitarian assistance that the European Commission has already made available in 2016 and the delivery of 266 tons of aid offered by countries through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in response to Mosul emergency. EU aid is covering the essential needs of the most vulnerable in Iraq, including food, health care, water, sanitation and hygiene as well as protection, shelter and education in emergencies.

ANNEX - RESTRICTIVE MEASURES ON SYRIA

– in force as of 10 March 2017 –

The EU restrictive measures on Syria consist of:

- Prohibition on the import of arms and related material from Syria. Export restrictions on certain equipment, goods and technology that might be used for internal repression or for the manufacture or maintenance of such products. The measure includes a prohibition on related financial assistance as well as insurance and reinsurance.
- Obligation for member states to inspect vessels and aircraft if there are reasonable grounds to believe they carry arms, related material or equipment which might be used for internal repression. This applies in member states' seaports, airports and in their territorial sea, in accordance with international law. Items that may not be exported from the EU to Syria must be seized.
- Import ban on crude oil and petroleum products from Syria. The prohibition concerns import, purchase and transport of such products as well as related finance and insurance. The ban also includes a prohibition on related technical and financial assistance. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on investment in the Syrian oil industry. This covers loans and credits, acquisition or extension of participations and the creation of joint ventures. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on investment in companies engaged in the construction of new power plants for electricity production in Syria.
- Prohibition to participate in the construction of new power plants, including related technical or financial assistance.
- Ban on exports to Syria of key equipment and technology for the oil and gas industry. The ban also includes a prohibition on related technical and financial assistance. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.

- Ban on trade in goods belonging to Syria's cultural heritage which have been illegally removed from Syria with the objective of facilitating the safe return of those goods.
- The assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU are frozen and it is prohibited to make funds or economic resources available, but the provision allows for legitimate trade to continue under strict conditions.
- Ban on trade in gold, precious metals and diamonds with Syrian public bodies and the central bank.
- Ban on supplying banknotes and coinage to the Syrian central bank.
- Member states must not give new grants and concessional loans to the Syrian government.
- Asset freeze on 67 entities and 235 persons responsible for or associated with the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria or supporting or benefiting from the regime. The release of certain frozen funds or economic resources may be authorised exceptionally under certain conditions if they are intended, inter alia, for humanitarian purposes; for evacuations from Syria; or in order to make payments on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for activities related to the OPCW verification mission and the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.
- Travel ban on 235 persons responsible for or associated with the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria or supporting or benefiting from the regime.
- Export ban on equipment, technology or software primarily intended for monitoring or interception of the internet or telephone communications.
- No disbursements and payments in connection with existing loan agreements between Syria and the European Investment Bank, as well as the suspension of technical assistance contracts relating to projects in Syria.
- Prohibition to trade Syrian public or public-guaranteed bonds to or from the government of Syria or its public bodies and Syrian financial institutions. No brokering or issuing services for such bonds are allowed.
- Prohibition for Syrian financial institutions to open new branches or subsidiaries in the EU or to establish new joint ventures or new correspondent banking relationships with EU banks.
- EU banks are prohibited from opening offices or accounts in Syria. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Member states are to restrain short and medium term financial support for trade with Syria, including export credits, guarantees and insurance. No more long-term support.
- No insurance or re-insurance to the Syrian government, public bodies, corporations or agencies (except health and travel insurance or compulsory third party insurance for Syrian persons or entities in the EU).
- Cargo flights operated by Syrian carriers and all flights operated by Syrian Arab Airlines may not have access to EU airports.
- Prohibition to export luxury goods to Syria.
- Prohibition on the export of aviation fuel to Syria.

For more information, see legislation instituting these restrictive measures and Frequently Asked Questions on EU restrictive measures.

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