

PRESS RELEASE

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Brussels III Conference on 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region': co-chairs declaration

1. The Third Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region" took place on 12-14 March 2019. It was hosted by the European Union and co-chaired by the United Nations.
2. Building upon the work of the conferences held in Kuwait (2013-15), London (2016) and Brussels (2017-18), Brussels III renewed and strengthened the political, humanitarian and financial commitment of the international community to support the Syrian people, the neighbouring countries and the communities most affected by the conflict. The Conference brought together 78 delegations including 56 States, 11 regional organisations and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) as well as 11 UN agencies.
3. The Conference acknowledged the extraordinary generosity of neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and of host communities providing refuge to millions of displaced people. It reiterated the unwavering support of the international community to Syria's neighbours in addressing the specific short, medium and long-term challenges that they are facing because of the Syria conflict. Iraq's and Egypt's efforts were also highlighted and commended.
4. Participants announced their pledges for both Syria and the region: US\$ 7 billion (€ 6.2 billion) for 2019 and multi-year pledges of close to US\$ 2.4 billion (€ 2.1 billion) for 2020 and beyond. In addition, international financial institutions and donors announced around \$ 21.01 billion (€ 18.5 billion) in loans on concessional terms. The Conference warmly welcomed the delivery by the international community of funds well in excess of pledges made at Brussels II in 2018. Co-chairs and main donors agreed to widen the resource base and ensure greater predictability, coherence and effectiveness of the aid. The pledges made at Brussels III are set out in the attached fundraising annex.
5. The humanitarian and resilience needs of people inside Syria and in the region however remain enormous. In 2019, the Humanitarian Response Plan for Syria amounts to US\$ 3.3 billion to provide immediate life-saving, protection and resilience support to 11.7 million people. In addition, US\$ 5.5 billion are required for the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) to support refugee and host-community humanitarian and resilience-related assistance in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.
6. Brussels III saw an unprecedented effort to involve Syrian and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) throughout the preparations and the three days of the Conference, including through side events. The Days of Dialogue brought above 1,000 participants, including representatives from more than 400 Syrian, regional and international NGOs/CSOs, to the Brussels Hemicycle of the European Parliament for a one-and-a-half-day interactive exchange with Ministers and senior officials from refugee-hosting countries, donors and UN agencies. Organisations were consulted on all key topics in the international response to the Syria conflict including displacements and comprehensive solutions for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), protection, access, health, education and child protection, regional economic recovery, digital tools, youth and employment, women's participation and leadership, justice and social cohesion inside Syria.
7. A diverse group of Syrian civil society organisations also met in closed-door sessions on the margins of the Conference to exchange views on the future of Syria, the political process in Geneva, the needs and challenges facing Syrian civil society across the spectrum, human rights and humanitarian protection issues, and a range of livelihood issues concerning the Syrian people. The group presented their views to EU High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and to UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen.
8. Brussels III put a special emphasis on Syrian women and on organisations representing their views and recognised their importance in efforts to bring sustainable peace to Syria and restore the country's social fabric. The Syrian Women's Advisory Board held a closed-door session with HR/VP Mogherini and UN Special Envoy Pedersen where it provided insights on how to advance women's participation and ensure that the women's rights agenda remains core to the political process. The EU and the UN also organised a dedicated gathering between Syrian women participants, Foreign Ministers and UN principals during the Conference's main official dinner.

Political

9. The Conference reaffirmed that a sustainable solution to the conflict in Syria can only be based on the Geneva Communiqué (2012) and the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) calling for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process facilitated by the UN to reach a political settlement that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The political process aims to end the conflict in Syria, establish credible and inclusive, non-sectarian governance and set a process for drafting a new constitution paving the way towards free and fair elections under UN supervision, including the diaspora. Participants also recalled the commitment of the international community to the preservation of Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.
10. The Conference welcomed the new UN Special Envoy for Syria. It expressed its strong support for his facilitation of the political process and for priorities outlined in his presentation to the Security Council on 28 February 2019, aiming to work on multiple dimensions of the political process towards the full implementation of Resolution 2254, starting with the discussion of confidence-building measures with the parties and the establishment of a safe, calm and neutral environment to engage a wide range of Syrians in the process including Syrian women, as over half the population, and to help the international parties to coordinate and enhance their support for the Geneva process.
11. The Conference welcomed the Special Envoy's emphasis on the need to release detainees and abductees and to clarify the fate of missing persons, as well as his intention to actively pursue efforts to scale up and prioritise action on this issue in his engagement with all concerned. The Conference recalled that arbitrary detention and forced disappearances are violations

of human rights and international humanitarian law and called upon all parties, in particular the Syrian civilian, military and security actors, to release persons arbitrarily detained in line with the UN Security Council resolutions 2254 and 2268. The fate of civil society activists returning to Syria, or based in areas recently retaken by the Syrian army or currently under the control of armed opposition groups, raises grave concerns. Unimpeded access to all detention facilities for independent monitors and international humanitarian organisations is a necessity, as well as work to continue monitoring and providing information on forced disappearances and missing persons.

12. The Conference further welcomed in particular the Special Envoy's efforts to facilitate the establishment of a balanced, inclusive and credible constitutional committee, with at least 30 percent female representation, as a first step towards the full implementation of Resolution 2254.
13. Participants reiterated the international community's strong concerns about the risks of a further escalation of violence in Syria and about the threat posed by terrorism. Efforts to combat terrorism must respect all parties' obligations under international law. They called on all parties involved to uphold their commitments and find a solution to maintain the ceasefire agreements, in particular the September 2018 memorandum of understanding between Russia and Turkey to establish a demilitarised zone in the northwest, deal with the threat posed by Al-Nusra Front / Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in the northwest, prioritise the protection of the estimated three million civilians in the province and avert a humanitarian catastrophe.
14. The Conference underlined that an enduring defeat of ISIL/Da'esh and other terrorist groups must remain a key international priority, including efforts to avoid any prospect of a resurgence of terrorism. Participants also reiterated that a lasting eradication of terrorism in Syria requires a genuine political settlement that addresses the root-causes of the conflict.

Humanitarian

15. The Conference noted that humanitarian assistance and protection represent an essential lifeline to alleviate some of the worst effects of the conflict. On average, 5.4 million people are reached inside Syria with some form of assistance and protection each month, with response prioritised according to severity of need. However, sustainably reducing the number of people in need and preventing further deterioration of the humanitarian situation will require improved humanitarian access and concerted work on livelihoods creation and community-level cohesion and inclusion, as well as efforts to begin addressing root causes and systemic drivers of need, restore basic services, ensure a protective environment for human rights and prevent recourse to harmful coping strategies such as child labour and early marriage.
16. Participants noted that there are currently an estimated 11.7 million people, almost half of whom are children, in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, including 5 million people in areas of most acute need. Some 6.2 million people are internally displaced, with 1.1 million people in areas categorised as hard-to-reach and more than 5.6 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.
17. The Conference reconfirmed the importance of delivering humanitarian assistance to civilians wherever they are, on the basis of their needs and in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Participants reiterated the need to continue to make use of all humanitarian response modalities in a complementary manner to reach those most in need. The Conference welcomed the adoption in December 2018 of UN Security Council Resolution 2449, which extended by one year the authorisation of cross-line and cross-border humanitarian assistance.
18. The co-chairs called on all parties to the conflict to abide by their legal obligations, exercise their responsibilities in full and facilitate unconditional, safe, timely, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to all those in need across Syria, wherever they are, rather than limited to those readily accessible or to whom access is granted by parties to the conflict. Humanitarian actors must be allowed to carry out impartial, independent needs assessments, select beneficiaries and monitor programmes, including protection monitoring, without any restriction and independently from considerations other than those of vulnerability and need. In areas that recently shifted control, efforts are needed to ensure continuity of services to all people in need and to further scale up humanitarian assistance and protection on the basis of needs, with a particular attention to women and girls and other vulnerable groups, including from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). While access has seen improvements in some of these areas, access challenges remain for humanitarian actors in others.
19. The Conference stressed that Syria remains a protection crisis with multiple protection challenges affecting the lives of millions of Syrians on a daily basis. It noted that, despite a relative reduction in the overall level of violence over the second half of 2018, conflict has continued to claim lives, cause destruction and suffering and drive displacement. The potential for further escalation remains a major source of concern, particularly in the Idlib Governorate and the surrounding areas in North-West Syria as well as in the North-East of the country. Freedom of movement issues and specific risks related to Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) must also be addressed to ensure the protection of civilians and promote greater access to people in needs. The Conference further stressed the need for increased protection by presence and for strengthened protection monitoring throughout Syria. It recalled that the protection of civilians, including Syrian humanitarian staff, and of civilian infrastructure is a non-derogatory obligation under international humanitarian law.
20. The Conference recalled that affordable access to civil documentation such as birth, marriage and death certificates or identity cards is a key protection concern. Participants called for respect for housing, land and property rights and access for all Syrians to and availability of basic services to all, without any restriction or limitation of any kind. They further stressed that housing, land and property rights, as well as the restitution of these rights, are a core factor for the rebuilding of Syrian society, ensuring its stability and the capacity of Syrians to project their future together in peace.
21. The Conference noted that an estimated 1.4 million displaced people returned to some areas of Syria in 2018, about 95 percent of whom were internally displaced. At the same time, the conflict has continued to generate large-scale displacement of people, with some 1.6 million people newly displaced in 2018 alone. It noted continuing efforts by humanitarian organisations to contribute towards the removal of obstacles to return and to support refugees and internally displaced people who have returned spontaneously. The co-chairs and the donor community concurred, however, that conditions inside Syria do not lend themselves to the promotion or facilitation of organised voluntary returns in conditions of safety and dignity in line with international law. Participants underscored that return is an individual right, to be exercised at the time of one's own choosing, and reiterated the importance of the Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria that are being discussed with the relevant authorities.
22. The importance of long-term support for children affected by the conflict, including psycho-social support and access to quality education, was noted. Participants recalled that all children allegedly associated with opposing armed groups and captured in the course of military operations should be treated primarily as victims of recruitment and use and in accordance with IHL and international norms and standards pertaining to the rights of the child.
23. The 2019 HRP underlines the need to balance immediate humanitarian life-saving support with resilience. The high incidence of poverty (estimated between 64% and 85%), the damaged and destroyed basic service infrastructure and the strained social fabric necessitate increased focus on targeted and mainstreamed, conflict-sensitive activities related to the life-sustaining needs of affected people.
24. Support will continue to prioritise continuing humanitarian life-saving needs with increased focus on livelihood opportunities and skills development, particularly for youth and women. Community participation and empowerment in the articulation and

prioritisation of needs remain key. It was stressed that funding decisions shall be conflict-sensitive, be based on independent needs assessments, shall in no way benefit or assist parties who have allegedly committed war crimes or crimes against humanity and shall not condone, or indirectly entrench, social and demographic engineering.

Regional development

25. The Conference commended the generosity and extraordinary efforts of Syria's neighbouring states and their citizens, in particular Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as Iraq and Egypt, in hosting millions of Syrian refugees over many years and continuing to provide them with much needed support. The co-chairs underscored that the remarkable contributions of host countries and host communities in receiving large Syrian refugee populations and providing them access to national services constituted a key reference for, and contribution to, the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees.
26. The international community confirmed its unwavering commitment to supporting Syria's neighbours, in a spirit of partnership and responsibility-sharing, in addressing the multiple challenges they face, including by sustaining humanitarian aid and resilience support and by strengthening national systems and response capacities. Donors will continue to support processes that strengthen Syria's neighbours' national capacities, ownership and leadership on the response. The global issue of refugees can best be tackled by enhancing the responsiveness, strength and resilience of host countries' economies.
27. The Conference recognised the progress that has been made by governments, donors and the UN in delivering on the commitments undertaken at past conferences in London and Brussels, including through the EU-Jordan and EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities, the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and the Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey partnership papers prepared for the Brussels II Conference. Against a backdrop of continued extreme vulnerability, more should nevertheless be done to maintain effective protection of refugees, further improve their access to legal documentation and/or temporary residency, widen their possibilities for self-sufficiency and, while doing so, contribute to the economic development of their host countries. The EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis has mobilised € 1.6 billion, out of which € 1.55 billion has already been committed, to actions supporting refugees in the neighbouring countries and host communities primarily in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey, along with other countries in the region.
28. Continued support for an integrated approach to resilience is critical including multi-year commitments to education and health, economic and labour market reforms, private sector development, sustainable and inclusive growth and livelihood opportunities, including for vulnerable groups such as youth and women, in line with the commitments taken by Jordan and Lebanon at previous international conferences. Participants reiterated the need to continue to improve and expand access to quality education, including by strengthening national education systems and increasing skills training opportunities for Syrian refugee and hosting communities' children and young people. For 2019, the 3RP should provide assistance to 5.6 million refugees and up to 3.9 million host community members across the five countries, in support of national efforts.
29. The Conference recognised resettlement to third countries as an essential protection tool for refugees with heightened protection risks. Its importance was highlighted, together with other legal pathways, in offering safe and dignified access to safety beyond the immediate region.
30. The Conference welcomed the new Government of Lebanon under the leadership of Prime Minister Hariri and commended the significant efforts made by Lebanon to host large numbers of Syrian refugees, including 951,000 registered. Following on the April 2018 Paris Economic Conference for Development through Reforms and with the Private Sector (CEDRE), it welcomed the renewed momentum to undertake the agreed institutional, economic and social reforms and to set in motion a follow-up process in a transparent manner, in partnership with civil society and the private sector, in order to prioritise investment projects and reforms. The Conference reiterated its support for this process and its engagement for the stability and the security of Lebanon. The EU reiterated its commitment to follow up on the March 2018 Rome Conference on "Support to Lebanon's Security Forces".
31. The Conference commended efforts made by Jordan in recent years to host large numbers of Syrian refugees, including over 670,000 registered, and provide them with legal documentation, access to essential services and employment opportunities in some sectors. It welcomed Jordan's vision for economic transformation, growth and reform towards the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development presented at the London Initiative conference on 28 February 2019 and its commitment to implement this vision under the five-year Reform and Growth Matrix.
32. The Conference strongly commended Turkey for continuing to provide protection to approximately 3.6 million Syrians and for providing them, on the basis of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection and of the Temporary Protection Regulation, with access to national services including health, education, labour market and social as well as municipal services. With its comprehensive response to a large-scale refugee situation, Turkey actively contributed good practices, lessons learned and valuable experiences to the development of the Global Compact on Refugees.
33. The Conference applauded the close cooperation between the 3RP actors and Turkey in planning the support to the refugee response in Turkey, particularly by investing in the self-reliance and resilience of refugees and host communities and supporting their inclusion in services provided through public institutions at the national, provincial and municipal levels. The Conference highlighted Turkey's major national contribution as well as the successful co-operation between the EU and Turkey in addressing the most critical needs of refugees and host communities, through the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey.
34. The Conference also fully recognised and appreciated Iraq's efforts in hosting and supporting Syrian refugees, mainly in its Kurdistan Region. Participants committed to maintaining a high level of support to Iraq in responding to its humanitarian crisis needs and the specific needs arising from the Syrian crisis.
35. The Conference recognised and welcomed Egypt's significant contribution in hosting Syrian refugees and the inclusive policies adopted by the Egyptian government in terms of health services, education and public services. The Conference also noted Egypt's willingness to strengthen its asylum system and to protect the rights of Syrian refugees.

Accountability and justice

36. Participants renewed their full commitment to continue promoting accountability and justice as an inherent part of any meaningful process of genuine and sustainable reconciliation in Syria. All those responsible for breaches of international law, including the use of chemical weapons and the blatant violations of international humanitarian and human rights law of which some may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be held accountable.
37. The co-chairs commended the work of the independent Commission of Inquiry (CoI) and took note of its report of 28 February 2019. They also welcomed the development of the International Independent and Impartial Mechanism (IIIM) and its continuous efforts for justice and accountability and called for the international community to continue ensuring the necessary support and funding for its functioning. They called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court.
38. The Conference was also informed by the outcomes of a side event on "Ensuring justice and sustainable peace in Syria" co-organised by Switzerland and Liechtenstein together with France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, the

Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom and co-sponsored by Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Qatar, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain. The event highlighted that the pursuit of accountability and justice should be victim-centred and complementary to the UN-led peace process in Geneva. It called for enhanced co-operation between national authorities, civil society and international accountability mechanisms such as the CoI and the IIIM.

Future steps

39. The Conference underlined the importance of continuing to work with and support Syria's civil society.
40. The EU will continue tracking financial commitments made during the Conference, working with the UN as was the case for Brussels I and Brussels II, and reporting on progress made in Jordan and Lebanon on key mutual policy commitments from past conferences. In order to continue to channel funds efficiently, it also intends to propose the extension of the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian conflict.
41. Participants agreed to maintain and regularly update the preparedness plans, including through the UN-led post-agreement planning mechanism initiated in 2016. Meanwhile, donor countries and the EU reiterated that reconstruction and international support for its implementation will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway. A successful reconstruction process also requires minimal conditions for stability and inclusiveness, a democratic and inclusive government guaranteeing people's safety and security, an agreed conflict-sensitive development strategy, reliable and legitimate interlocutors as well as guarantees in terms of funding accountability. None of these conditions are yet fulfilled in Syria.

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