Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with Swedish Prime Minister Kristersson at the International Donors' Conference 'Together for the people in Türkiye and Syria'

Brussels, 20 March 2023

Good afternoon,

Prime Minister Kristersson and I hosted today the Donors' Conference for the people in Türkiye and Syria, following the devastating earthquakes. I am very happy to announce that the international community showed today strong solidarity. I want to thank all the donors for their generous pledges and contributions. We all know that the scale of the devastation is staggering. More than 49,000 people have lost their lives. Thousands are still missing. Millions lost their homes. I would like to express once more my heartfelt condolences for the lives lost, and wish a full recovery to those who were injured.

Now, the results. Team Europe pledged today EUR 3.6 billion for the people in Türkiye and Syria. In total, with a contribution of the international community, we raised EUR 7 billion for the people in Türkiye and Syria. This pledge includes EUR 1.1 billion from the European Commission and EUR 500 million from the European Investment Bank, backed by the EU budget. I think this is a very strong signal, EUR 7 billion from the international community. The European Union has been by the victims of the earthquake from day one of this tragedy. Our search and rescue teams reached Gaziantep and the region barely a few hours after the first earthquake. Our humanitarian support started flowing within days.

Just like we were rapidly by the side of the people affected with emergency support, we are now by their side for recovery and reconstruction, not only with money but also with know-how. We are ready to work with Türkiye on rebuilding sustainably. We are ready to share our expertise and experience on building seismic-resistant houses. Schools and hospitals that the European Union and Türkiye have designed and built together in the last years have withstood the terrible earthquake. And we are also ready to work together to build environmentally friendly houses to reduce energy use and the impact on the climate.

My final point is on Syria. We have provided significant humanitarian support to the people of Syria, as soon as the earthquake struck. And today, the European Commission pledged additional EUR 108 million for humanitarian assistance and early recovery. Altogether, during this Donor's Conference, we managed to raise with our partners EUR 950 million for the people in Syria. This is just the first step – this is very important – because on 14-15 June, we will host here in Brussels the seventh Conference on the Future of Syria and the Region. The aim of this Conference will be both to focus on international engagement for the political solution to the conflict but also to generate additional pledges of humanitarian and early recovery support for Syria.

In conclusion, today was a good day for the international solidarity. We have shown to the people of Türkiye and Syria that we are supporting those in need. But we know that there is a lot of work ahead of us and this is the beginning of a process.

Thank you.

STATEMENT/23/1796

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