

**SYRIA HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR CALLS ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO URGENTLY FUND WINTER RESPONSE**

**DAMASCUS / Syria, 16 January 2015** – The winter storm that swept through the Middle East has had a significant humanitarian impact, particularly on internally displaced persons.

As winter conditions worsen, displaced people -especially those sheltering in tents, unfinished buildings and other informal dwellings - will be further exposed to illnesses associated with cold weather.

“Winter has brought more hardship to Syrians already struggling to find safe shelter and ways to feed, clothe and protect their families from illness and exposure to risk,” stated Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, Yacoub El Hillo.

In preparation for this cold season, the United Nations and partners launched a US\$206 million winterization plan in October 2014, targeting 3.3 million people inside Syria.

As part of this plan, UN agencies such as UNHCR, WHO, UNICEF, UNRWA and WFP, as well as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and NGOs, have in recent months distributed winterization assistance to hundreds of thousands of people across Syria. This has included, for example, blankets and warm clothing, fuel, winter kits and cash assistance.

However, the winter plan remains underfunded by US\$70 million. On 15 January, Humanitarian Coordinator El Hillo announced that US\$4 million will be allocated to support the winter efforts. This will come from the Syria Emergency Response Fund (ERF), managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). This step aims to deliver more winter assistance to the most vulnerable families to help them stay warm amidst the harsh weather conditions.

“After four years of crisis, people’s ability to cope is extremely stretched, and the needs continue to grow. Though the international community has been generous, funding has not kept pace in the face of growing needs. Additional funding is urgently needed to enable humanitarian actors reach more people with winter assistance in time,” said El Hillo.

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