Remarks at the opening of ‘Supporting the future of Syria and the region’, Brussels II Conference

Brussels, 25 April 2018

As delivered

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, High Representative Federica [Mogherini], Staffan [de Mistura],

Thank you for gathering here today.

We have again had a chance over the last couple of days to hear from a number of Syrians themselves here in Brussels.

What ordinary Syrians want is for people to stop dropping bombs on them, to stop shelling them and to stop shooting at them. For countless Syrian children, these atrocities are the only things they have known in life. That has to stop.

The Secretary-General talked about the need for our appeals to be funded.

For the Humanitarian Response Plan for inside Syria we seek US$3.6 billion this year. So far we have $800 million – 23 per cent.

For the Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan, we seek $5.6 billion, of which $1.2 billion has already been committed in earlier conferences. This part of our appeal, as we start today’s pledging, is 27 per cent funded.

I hope we can make substantial progress to increase the 23 per cent and the 27 per cent today.

What I can assure you is that if we are given the resources, we can relieve the suffering of people in Syria. Every month, we reach 7.5 million people or more with food and health items.

Within the resources available, the right thing to do is to focus on the most vulnerable – those in the most acute need.
Inside Syria, that means people like those of eastern Ghouta and Idleb, subject to the most extreme violence in recent days and weeks, and the most vulnerable in Government controlled parts of the country.

We have to address needs based on the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality.

We cannot expect donors to provide the enormous resources we seek if we cannot assure them that our help will reach those in greatest need. That means having enough UN and agency staff on the ground to assess needs and monitor implementation.

Looking to the future, I want to emphasize the importance of greater focus on providing education for children – be they refugees or still in the country. I, like Federica, want to support Farah and other children. They want to learn and become beacons. We have seen some but still insufficient progress with that, and I hope we can address it today.

I also want to say a special word about humanitarian mine action.

My colleague Agnes Marcaillou from the UN Mine Action Service is here and will say more later.

But we need to scale up risk education, awareness, and survey work to protect people from the unexploded remnants of war.

As with other crises, the suffering in Syria has a female face. Crimes of gender-based violence have been perpetrated on an industrial scale. For these, and many other crimes, there will need in due course to be accountability.

As Federica started by saying, we want Syrians to know that they are not forgotten. We are appealing on their behalf for an end to the violence. For a political solution. For a safe future with hope - of education, healthcare, work, and a return home. In other words: for a normal life.

Thank you.

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