

**UNITED NATIONS CALLS FOR SUSTAINED SUPPORT TO SYRIANS
AND THE REGION AHEAD OF BRUSSELS CONFERENCE**

(Brussels, 13 March 2019) – On the eve of the foreign ministers’ meeting at the third *Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region*, three UN Principals today warned that the Syria crisis is not yet over and called for sustained and large-scale support to vulnerable Syrians, refugees and the communities hosting them.

As the crisis enters its ninth year, humanitarian needs inside Syria remain at record levels with 11.7 million people in need of some form of humanitarian aid and protection. Some 6.2 million people are internally displaced and more than 2 million boys and girls are out of school in Syria. An estimated 83 percent of Syrians live below the poverty line, and people are increasingly vulnerable due to the loss or lack of sustained livelihoods.

“Without an immediate and substantial injection of funds, life-saving provisions of food, water, health care, shelter and protection services will likely be interrupted,” said UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock. “It is vital that the international community remains by the side of every woman, man, girl and boy in Syria who need our help to meet the very basic requirements of a dignified life. If donors provide the funding, we can implement the plans to help achieve that.”

The situation is also driving the largest refugee crisis in the world. There are over 5.6 million Syrian refugees and up to 3.9 million impacted members of host communities in the neighbouring countries.

The UN is therefore urgently seeking increased funding to help people in need through a US\$3.3 billion appeal for the response inside Syria, and a \$5.5 billion refugee and resilience plan for the neighbouring countries.

“Having just visited Syria and Syrian refugees in Lebanon, I’m deeply troubled by the widening gap between their massive needs and the support being made available for the international refugee response. Eight years into the largest refugee crisis in decades, around 70 percent of Syrian refugees live a razor-edge existence below the poverty line,” said the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi. “Reduced assistance due to funding cuts means that refugees are forced to make agonizing choices every day, such as taking children out of school to work or reducing meals. They are also vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.”

“It is essential that the international community stays the course in supporting the millions of Syrian refugees who live in neighbouring countries and still require protection and assistance. No less support needs to be extended to the local host communities and governments who have been sheltering millions of Syrian refugees for the past eight years,” said Grandi. “Help is also needed for those refugees – and the much larger number of internally displaced people – who are choosing to return home, in very difficult circumstances.”

Host countries and their communities need predictable financing to continue the support for refugees, ensure national services are available, and to expand opportunities for both refugees and citizens. They have generously hosted refugees, offering asylum and protection, opening public services, enabling more and more refugees to participate in the local economy and building the resilience of refugees and hosts alike.

“In Syria, poverty is soaring, basic service infrastructure is damaged or destroyed, and the social fabric is strained to the limit,” said Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator. “Host governments and communities in countries neighbouring Syria need our support to stay the course in extending their generosity to refugees while at the same time maintaining the momentum of their own development path. We need the international community to increase its support for resilience both in Syria and in neighbouring countries.”

Despite generous funding by donors in 2018, only 65 percent of the \$3.4 billion required for the inside-Syria plan last year was received. The regional refugee and resilience plan requesting \$5.6 billion for 2018 was 62 percent funded. The three UN Principals jointly call on the international donor community to pledge generously for 2019 during the high-level conference tomorrow.

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