

**UN ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL KYUNG-WHA KANG
REMARKS AT THE LAUNCH OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN
FOR IRAQ**

European Parliament in Brussels, 4 June 2015

As delivered

On behalf of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien, I thank you sincerely for being here today to show solidarity with the people of Iraq.

I thank the European Parliament for hosting this event and the European Commission, ECHO and the people of Europe for your leading role in humanitarian action, in Iraq and around the world.

Over the past 18 months, the people of Iraq have suffered a terrible tragedy which continues to unfold today. A year ago, around half a million Iraqis had fled their homes for safety due to growing violence in Anbar between ISIL and associated groups and the Government. Within days, that number doubled as large portions of the country came under ISIL control. Today, nearly three million people are internally displaced. Many families have had to move several times to stay one step ahead of the horrific violence sweeping across whole regions of the country. Others do not know where they can find safety, caught in a sectarian divide that is not of their making.

Every one of these three million displaced people is a child, a woman or a man who has been forced to leave a familiar home and community for an uncertain future. Most recently, over 237,000 people fled Ramadi as the city fell to ISIL control.

More than eight million Iraqis now need emergency aid and protection. All segments of the Iraqi society – Yezidi, Christian, Shabak, Turkmen, Shia, Sunni and Kurd – have been affected by the violence.

The economy has been disrupted and agricultural production has fallen. Hospitals and health facilities have been damaged and destroyed. Hundreds of schools have been used as emergency shelters or for military purposes. Even in safe areas, unemployment and the cost of living have increased and wages have declined.

Women and girls have been abducted, subjected to systematic sexual violence and enslavement. Some children have suffered the loss of their parents; others have been forced to fight or to flee for their lives.

Displaced families are sheltering wherever they can: in schools and abandoned buildings; along the sides of roads; and at checkpoints, while they wait to cross into safer territory. They have no access to the most basic services: shelter, clean water, health care and education.

In response to this desperate situation, the United Nations and its partners have dramatically scaled up their programmes inside the country over the past year.

The humanitarian operation in Iraq is now one of the largest and most complex in the world, providing support for over two million Iraqis across every governorate in the country, every month.

Food, bottled water and basic survival items are distributed to people on roadsides and at checkpoints. Millions more people receive help through the monthly food rations distributed in camps and the medicines and healthcare supplies that are sent to local clinics. There are counselling services for children and women who have suffered psychological trauma.

But these humanitarian programmes are now seriously threatened by funding shortfalls. Without more support, some 50 per cent of humanitarian programmes may start to be cut back or closed down within the next couple of weeks. There is a real risk that millions of people will go without clean water, food or essential health services.

That is why we are here today to launch the Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq, which is based on an updated strategy that reflects the deteriorating situation over the past 9 months.

The plan calls for US\$497.9 million to provide life-saving assistance and protection to 5.6 million people in Iraq for the rest of the year. The entire humanitarian community needs your sustained support to continue our efforts to help Iraqis in need.

We have all seen this crisis unfold in the most dramatic way on our television and computer screens. From the violent takeover of Mosul to the images of families stranded on Mount Sinjar and the recent fall of Ramadi. The people of Iraq are living this catastrophe every day.

While we search for solutions to end the violence, we must do everything in our power to help them. The people of Iraq need our help, now. This Humanitarian Response Plan provides a concrete way forward to addressing the urgent needs of women, girls, boys and men across Iraq. We must not let them down.

Thank you very much.