

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL VALERIE AMOS**

**REMARKS TO THE PLEDGING CONFERENCE ON SYRIA**

**Kuwait City, 15 Jan 2014**

*Checked against delivery*

Your Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah [*Emir of Kuwait*],  
Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,  
Excellencies,  
Ministers,  
Colleagues,

One year ago, the Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres and I asked you to support the efforts of UN humanitarian agencies and our partner organizations in responding to the growing humanitarian crisis in Syria and in neighbouring countries, and you rose to our challenge.

Today we make that appeal again.

And I thank the Emir, the Government and people of Kuwait for their generosity in welcoming us back.

I will speak about the humanitarian situation and response inside Syria. Mr Guterres, on the needs of refugees and neighbouring countries.

Nearly three years into this conflict, as the violence intensifies and the situation on the ground becomes more complex, people are becoming increasingly desperate.

I have just been in Damascus – my seventh visit to Syria -- and in a school housing Palestine refugees and a shelter housing Syrians displaced from other parts of the country, I was told of the unimaginable horrors which forced people to flee their homes. The numbers are now so large they are difficult to comprehend.

When I first visited Syria, nearly two years ago, we estimated that one million people needed urgent humanitarian assistance.

That figure now stands at 9.3 million – around the population of Chad, Sweden or Bolivia. Nearly 6.5 million people are internally displaced.

The very fabric of the society has unravelled, and sectarianism has taken hold.

Siege has become a weapon of war with thousands of people blockaded in their communities running out of supplies and unable to get basic services.

I am deeply troubled by the persistent reports of people running out of food in those besieged communities, where some 245,000 people live. Children, women, men, are trapped. Hungry. Ill. Losing hope. Losing faith in the international community's ability to help them.

Opposition groups continue to besiege the towns of Nubul and Az-Zahraa in Rural Aleppo, while Government forces besiege the town of Eastern Ghouta, Darayya and Moadamiyah in Rural Damascus, the Old City in Homs, and Yarmouk Palestinian refugee Camp.

UNRWA estimates that more than 50,000 houses of Palestinian refugee families have been damaged.

Nearly every Syrian is affected by the crisis with a 45 per cent drop in GDP and a currency that has lost 80 per cent of its value.

Damage and destruction of infrastructure has put the most basic services at risk. The water supply is down by 50 per cent.

And prices have sky-rocketed and many staples are no longer widely available.

Public health is in crisis with two-thirds of public hospitals damaged or destroyed and nearly half the ambulance fleet stolen, burned or damaged beyond repair.

Nearly one-fifth of Syria's schools are either damaged or being used as shelters, and we are in danger of losing a generation of Syria's children with more than two million out of school and many suffering trauma, exploitation and abuse. That is why the No Lost Generation campaign is so important. To protect Syria's future, we must protect Syria's children, by restoring hope and healing the wounds of war. I hope that everyone in this room will support the campaign.

Gender-based violence including domestic violence and early marriage are a growing concern.

I am often asked who is to blame.

All sides in this conflict have shown a total disregard for their responsibilities under International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. In its Presidential Statement on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013, the UN Security Council called for an end to indiscriminate attacks, and for the unhindered passage of humanitarian aid. But we have yet to see any major difference on the ground. In fact, the situation has got worse.

And in these difficult and dangerous conditions, humanitarian agencies and personnel face significant risks. 48 humanitarian staff killed, many kidnapped. The detention and

harassment of drivers at checkpoints is so widespread that their recruitment has become difficult.

But despite the constraints, humanitarian operations are making a difference to millions of people's lives every day. We are, of course, extremely frustrated because we cannot reach all those who desperately need help but thanks to the generosity of our donors, including many here today, and the commitment of humanitarian workers, we actually increased humanitarian response activities across the country throughout 2013.

In January last year, WFP and its partners delivered food to some 900,000 people. By December, this figure had increased to 3.8 million.

More than ten million people now have access to safe drinking water, as a result of the work of UNICEF and its partners.

WHO and UNICEF have supported a polio immunization campaign that reached 2.2 million children.

UNFPA is working with partners to provide reproductive health services to 1.8 million women, and UNHCR and partners distributed relief items to nearly five million people and provided financial assistance to more than half a million internally displaced Syrians.

Despite this, 2.5 million people remain in "hard to reach" areas. The shifting boundaries of military control, proliferation of groups on the ground, increase in checkpoints and closure of roads complicate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

We know that we must do all we can to continue to scale up our activities this year if we are to keep pace with the growing needs.

The plans are costed and prioritized. We need 1.4 billion dollars to cover life-saving needs in the next 6 months. For the whole year, we need 2.27 billion dollars. This is for work inside Syria.

A contribution of \$1 million will fund the Danish Refugee Council's project to deliver clean drinking water and sanitation services to 11,000 displaced people in Rural Damascus and Dara'a.

\$10 million will help UNFPA to reach 2.8 million people with life-saving reproductive health care services in nine provinces.

\$25 million will enable us to deliver all-season shelter materials to 88,000 people in five provinces, under a project run by the International Organization for Migration.

And \$100 million will help WFP's operations to provide more than 4 million people with food, for one month.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Even as the fighting has raged inside their country, Syrians have continued to help each other. So many of those who have been forced to leave their homes seeking shelter and security have turned to friends, neighbours and other family members. Many can now no longer cope.

In Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey, host communities and Governments are leading the relief effort, at huge cost to their economies and sometimes to the fragile consensus which exists between communities.

We need you, the international community, to continue to give your support. This is the biggest humanitarian crisis we face today. We all hope that the political talks due to begin next week will deliver a positive result. In the meantime, every child, every woman, every man affected by this crisis deserves our continued support.

Thank you.