



Supporting the future of Syria and the region

Brussels V Conference | 29-30 March 2021

CO-CHAIRS' STATEMENT

1. The Fifth Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region" took place on 30 March 2021 in virtual format. Brussels V was hosted by the European Union (EU) and co-chaired with the United Nations (UN). It brought together 79 delegations including 52 States, 8 regional organisations and International Financial Institutions, 16 UN agencies and 3 humanitarian organisations. The Conference was preceded by a virtual Day of Dialogue and by a week of side events.

2. Brussels V took place shortly after the tenth anniversary of the peaceful popular demonstrations of March 2011. Their violent repression set the country on the path to a horrific war. Brussels V was the ninth international conference devoted to the Syria crisis, following on events held in Kuwait (2013-2015), London (2016) and Brussels (2017-2020). The Conference reiterated the political, humanitarian and financial commitment of the international community towards the Syrian people. It also renewed the unwavering support of the international community to Syria's neighbours in addressing the immediate and long-term challenges brought upon them by the conflict, together with other severe development and socio-economic challenges and the consequences of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Participants at the Brussels V Conference announced their pledges for both Syria and the region: US\$4.4 billion (€3.6 billion) for 2021 and multi-year pledges of close to US\$2 billion (€1.7 billion) for 2022 and beyond. In addition, international financial institutions and donors announced around \$7 billion (€5.9 billion) in loans on concessional terms. The Conference warmly welcomed the delivery by the international community of funds well in excess of pledges made at Brussels IV for 2020. Co-chairs and main donors agreed to continue widening the resource base and ensure greater timeliness, predictability, flexibility, coherence and effectiveness of the aid. The pledges made at Brussels V are set out in the attached fundraising annex.

4. The Syria conflict continues to generate needs unparalleled in scale, severity and complexity. The situation inside the country worsened dramatically in 2020 as a result of rapidly deteriorating socio-economic conditions, further exacerbated by the crises affecting Lebanon and the impact of COVID-19. There is an estimated 13.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance inside the country, a 21 percent increase from 2020, almost half of whom are children. In 2021, the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Syria amounts to an estimated US\$ 4.2 billion to provide immediate life-saving, protection and resilience support to 12.3 million people within the country.

5. The conflict in Syria also has profound repercussions for regional stability. More than 10 million people, including over 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees and some 4.8 million impacted host community members, are in need of support in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In 2021, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Programme (3RP) seeks over US\$ 5.8 billion to address the growing and multiple vulnerabilities that refugees, host communities and host governments are facing.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic provides an additional challenge. In light of increasing regional trends in the number of cases, continued scaling-up of the effective public health and social measures is vital. Conference participants highlighted the need to ensure that vaccines be provided equitably to reach the most vulnerable and frontline workers, including health and humanitarian workers, across the country through the most direct means. This vaccination campaign should be fully funded without diverting funding from increasing humanitarian needs. Vaccination campaigns in neighbouring countries should ensure that all individuals, regardless of legal status, have access to vaccines according to vulnerability criteria.

Engagement with civil society

7. The Conference underlined the importance of continuing to work with and provide financial and capacity-building support to Syria's civil society. Syrian CSOs have shouldered a major part of the humanitarian, protection and resilience effort of the last ten years. They will have a strong role to play in shaping the country's future and advocating for the rights of all Syrians, especially those of women and of the next generation.

8. In spite of the logistical challenges posed by the pandemic, Brussels V reached out to civil society representatives in Syria and the region. 1,572 organisations from all over Syria and from the region were consulted throughout the preparations on key topics pertaining to the international response to the Syria conflict, including through extensive online consultations and close to 40 interactive side events over the week preceding the Conference. The EU also included insights from the constant engagement and dialogue within its local online consultative space for Syrian civil society. In keeping with past practice, a Day of Dialogue was held virtually on 29 March where Syrian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Turkish and international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) interacted with Ministers and senior officials from refugee-hosting countries, the EU and UN agencies.

9. EU High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Josep Borrell Fontelles and UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen held a virtual closed-door session side event with the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR). Participants presented their views and insights on a broad spectrum of issues related to livelihoods, human rights, detainees, protection of civilians and humanitarian access. The indispensable role that Syrian civil society can play in support of a political solution to the conflict was also discussed.

10. Brussels V put special emphasis on Syrian women and on organisations representing their views, recognising women's vital importance in restoring the social fabric in Syria and creating the foundation for sustainable peace, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The Syrian Women's Advisory Board held a closed-door session with HR/VP Borrell and UN Special Envoy Pedersen, where it provided insights on ensuring that women's rights and meaningful participation remain core to the political process and to the aid response.

Political and security situation

11. Progress towards a political solution remains elusive after a decade of conflict. While the ceasefire in north-west Syria has now mostly held for a year, and an uneasy and fragile calm also prevails in the north-east, front-line military exchanges remain ongoing. There has also been an alarming increase in the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the past year. Civilians are still losing their lives to violence and military operations and grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights

law continue throughout the country. Participants strongly condemned the recent wave of attacks in north-west Syria, which killed and injured dozens of civilians during the days preceding Brussels V. Security conditions in southern Syria remain fluid and require increased attention. The continuous and dramatic worsening of Syria's economy has set the country further on a course of protracted instability.

12. The Conference reaffirmed that a sustainable solution to the Syrian conflict can only be based on the Geneva Communiqué (2012) and the full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) calling for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process facilitated by the UN to reach a political settlement that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The political process aims to end the conflict in Syria, establish credible and inclusive, gender-equal, non-sectarian governance and complete the process of drafting a new constitution, paving the way towards free and fair elections under UN supervision, including the diaspora. The Conference underlined the importance of Syrian women's full and meaningful participation at all stages of the political process at a minimum of 30 per cent representation in decision-making structures, with the goal of parity. Participants also recalled the commitment of the international community to preserve Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

13. The Conference expressed its strong support for the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria towards the full implementation of resolution 2254 (2015). Brussels V reiterated the need for the parties to engage meaningfully in the political process. While the Constitutional Committee is only a part of the political process as mandated by resolution 2254 (2015), progress in its work could help open the door to a wider political process and contribute to a political settlement. Conference participants recalled the need for both parties to show genuine commitment to the process.

14. The Conference welcomed the Special Envoy's priority on the need to release detainees and abductees and to clarify the fate of missing persons, as well as his renewed engagement with all concerned to scale up action on this issue. The Conference called upon all parties to release persons arbitrarily detained and address the issue of missing persons in line with UN Security Council resolutions 2254 (2015), 2268 (2016), and 2474 (2019). The Conference called for all Syrian parties to cease all breaches of international and human rights law, including arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances, torture, sexual abuse and illegal execution of detainees and abductees. All detainees and abductees must be allowed contact with their family and a lawyer. Unimpeded access to all detention facilities for independent monitors and international humanitarian organisations is a necessity, as well as work to continue monitoring and providing information on forcibly disappeared and missing persons. The Conference expressed its expectation that all Syrian parties would abide by international standards and that any past or present case of alleged abuse during detention would be investigated. Harassing the families of civil society representatives and political activists is also reprehensible.

15. The Conference called on all parties to the conflict to take urgent measures to prevent any new disappearances, notably of persons deprived of their liberty. It called for the establishment of an independent mechanism with an international mandate and victim-led approach to clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons, without distinction. Participants also stressed the need to support victims, survivors and families of those detained or unaccounted for, as well as survivors, and the need to deal with the past.

16. Brussels V reiterated full international support for the call made by the UN Special Envoy for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria in line with resolution 2254 (2015). Participants reiterated the international community's strong concern about the risk of a resurgence of violence in Syria. They called on all parties involved to uphold their obligations under international law and maintain their commitments to the ceasefire agreements, in particular the September 2018 Memorandum of Understanding between Russia and Turkey aimed at establishing a demilitarised zone in the north-

west and its additional protocol dated 5 March 2020. While the challenge posed by UN Security Council-listed terrorist groups must be dealt with, this must be done through a co-operative, targeted and effective approach that safeguards stability and in full respect of international humanitarian and human rights law, for the protection of the estimated four million civilians residing in north-west Syria, in an effort to avoid another humanitarian catastrophe including high levels of mass displacement.

17. The Conference underlined that an enduring defeat of ISIL/Da'esh and other UN Security Council-listed terrorist groups must remain a key international priority. The resurgence of ISIL/Da'esh in the central and eastern desert in 2020 and early 2021 is disconcerting and requires collective efforts to counter. Participants also reiterated that a lasting eradication of terrorism in Syria requires a genuine political settlement that addresses the root causes of the conflict.

Humanitarian situation and assistance within Syria

18. Ten years into the crisis, the Conference noted that humanitarian needs have never been deeper. There are currently 13.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria, almost half of whom are children. The number of food-insecure Syrians has increased by 57 per cent in a year to reach 12.4 million people – 60 per cent of the population – and as many as 1.3 million Syrians now fully depend on food aid to survive. Food prices are now 33 times higher than the pre-war average and around 90 per cent of the population is estimated to live in poverty.

19. The Conference also expressed concern about the continuous and dramatic worsening of Syria's economy after ten years of conflict, compounded by the ongoing crisis in neighbouring Lebanon and the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has created the worst socio-economic conditions for Syria since the beginning of the war, including protracted instability, increased poverty, food insecurity, vanishing livelihoods and lack of basic needs and services. The Syrian pound has lost 80 per cent of its value since October 2019 and average income has plummeted well below what is needed to secure access to essential items. The price of the average food basket, in particular, has increased by 236 per cent between December 2019 and December 2020.

20. Humanitarian operations reached an average of 7.7 million people every month across Syria in 2020. They represent an essential lifeline to alleviate some of the conflict's worst effects. The Conference reconfirmed the importance of delivering humanitarian assistance to all civilians in need in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The co-chairs called on all parties to the conflict to abide by their legal obligations under international humanitarian law, exercising their responsibilities in full to facilitate unconditional, safe, timely, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to all those in need across Syria. Humanitarian actors must be allowed to carry out impartial and independent needs assessments, select beneficiaries and partners and monitor programmes, including protection monitoring, without any restrictions and considerations other than vulnerability and need. The protection of humanitarian and healthcare workers, civilians and civilian infrastructure is an obligation under international humanitarian law.

21. Participants urgently called for a concerted effort to use all humanitarian response modalities, in a complementary and co-operative manner, to reach those most affected in the whole of Syria. In particular, Conference participants stressed the necessity to renew and possibly expand UN Security Council resolution 2533 (2020) on cross-border assistance for an additional 12 months. There is no alternative to replace the current UN-supported cross-border operations into north-west Syria to meet the urgent needs of 3.4 million people. Conference participants also urged the UN Security Council to immediately find solutions to access challenges in areas previously covered by the cross-border resolution in north-east and north-west Syria. A combination of more cross-border and cross-line access must ensure aid delivery to all Syrians in need, wherever they are and as long as needed. Efforts

to further decentralise humanitarian presence must also continue to contribute to improved protection outcomes and ensure community resilience and empowerment and more localised aid delivery.

22. The Conference stressed that Syria remains a protection crisis with multiple challenges affecting the lives of millions of Syrians daily, including their psychosocial and mental health needs. The safety and security of civilians must be placed at the heart of the humanitarian response. It stressed the heavy impact of the crisis on women and children, in particular through increased gender-based violence including domestic violence and forced marriage, labour and exploitation. Women and girls, particularly adolescents, are bearing the brunt of the protection crisis. Syria's severe economic crisis leads families to make increasingly desperate choices to survive resulting in more children out of school, finding themselves at increased risk of child labour and child marriage.

23. The Conference recalled that access to civil documentation such as birth, marriage and death certificates or identity cards is a key protection measure for all Syrians, whether inside the country or abroad. It called for respect for housing, land and property rights, notably for women, and availability and access for all Syrians to justice and to basic services without restrictions or limitations. Housing, land and property rights and their restitution are a core factor for enabling Syrians to plan for a future life together in peace and dignity.

24. The Humanitarian Response Plan has three strategic objectives: saving lives and alleviating suffering, enhancing protection, and increasing resilience and access to services. The Conference recalled that support must continue to prioritise life-saving needs, including protection and sexual and reproductive health services, with an increased focus on sustaining dignified and adequate livelihood opportunities, skills development and economic empowerment, particularly for youth and women, who have been disproportionately impacted by conflict and more recently COVID-19. Community participation and empowerment in the articulation and prioritisation of needs remain key. Assistance shall be gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive, be based on independent needs assessments, shall in no way benefit or assist parties who have allegedly committed war crimes or crimes against humanity and shall not condone, or indirectly entrench, social and demographic engineering.

25. The Conference recalled that the protracted nature of the Syria crisis requires stepping up efforts, within the humanitarian framework, to support early recovery, resilience, community capacity-building and self-reliance through the participatory provision of basic services, livelihoods and local economic development, that will strengthen the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of the humanitarian response. This is particularly urgent in rural areas, where collapsing agrarian livelihoods are further eroding Syria's food stability and assistance to smallholder farmers needs scaling up, including by improving access to water. In a context where space for civil society is narrow and at risk of closing, the approach described above can help enhance social cohesion, empower local communities to identify their needs and defend their rights, and ensure a more protective environment limiting the recourse to harmful coping strategies. Conflict sensitivity is key to its success.

26. Finally, when and where possible, the Conference concurred on the need for strengthened efforts to stabilise the situation in Syria and contribute to social cohesion and resilience, including capacity-building for civil society, and more inclusive governance practices. Such assistance should also strictly adhere to a conflict-sensitive approach.

27. The UN reiterated that its Parameters and Principles for UN assistance in Syria will guide UN assistance beyond emergency life-saving aid.

Return of internally displaced people and refugees

28. The Syria crisis is by far the largest displacement crisis of our time. More than 12 million Syrians remain displaced, including 6.7 million people internally and 5.6 million residing as refugees in neighbouring countries. Regarding IDPs, there were 1.8 million new movements and 448,000 spontaneous return movements recorded in 2020, the majority of which were in north-west Syria. As to refugees, an estimated 38,233 returned during 2020, a sharp decrease compared to 2018 and 2019. Return is a right to be exercised based on individual's free and informed decision. However, participants underscored that conditions inside Syria have not been met for the promotion or organisation of large-scale, safe and dignified voluntary return in line with international law. Refugees and IDPs choosing to return need security from armed conflict, political persecution and arbitrary arrests, access to functioning services and livelihood opportunities, among other considerations. Support should be guided by their needs, views, concerns and decisions, based on accurate and factual information whether to return or not at the present time. It should not contribute to demographic engineering. All governments hosting refugees and asylum seekers in the region and beyond must uphold non-refoulement and commit to a moratorium on summary deportations of Syrian refugees. Participants reiterated the importance of the *Protection Thresholds and Parameters for Refugee Return to Syria*, issued by the UN in February 2018.

29. The Conference noted the importance of assistance as a way of working towards the removal of obstacles to voluntary, safe, and dignified return, and of supporting refugees and IDPs, as well as the communities to which they have returned spontaneously. Sustaining and increasing assistance levels and access to protection, livelihoods and services in host countries as well as reinforcing them inside Syria are key components in enabling a voluntary decision by refugees to return, free from push factors, and to support local solutions. Those who return spontaneously or consider doing so also need conflict-sensitive support and assistance in advocating for their rights, including property and human rights. Conference participants called on the Syrian authorities to do more to put in place conditions that would be conducive to returns, and address the obstacles to return cited by refugees, including ensuring that their safety is guaranteed and their rights are respected on return.

30. The Conference reaffirmed the relevance of the Global Compact on Refugees in the context of the Syria crisis. The co-chairs and the donor community underscored the need to maintain a comprehensive protection and reinforce a durable solutions strategy in Syria and the region. The Conference also recognised resettlement to third countries as a fundamental component of international responsibility-sharing and an essential protection tool for refugees with heightened protection risks, including for women and girls who are survivors or at risk of violence. Its importance was highlighted, together with other legal pathways, in offering safe and dignified access to a longer-term solution beyond the immediate region.

31. Participants also recalled that the vulnerability of the estimated 438,000 Palestine refugees living in Syria is increasing.

Education and children

32. The conference agreed that education and child protection remain key areas for investment. Every year, one third or nearly 2.5 million school-age Syrian children do not receive any form of education. Public education is under pressure across the region. Progress on providing access to quality education, non-formal education and catch-up programmes should be accelerated, including remote and distance learning due to the COVID-19 risk. They play a vital role in protecting children, many of whom are

suffering psychosocial impacts of prolonged conflict and displacement, and pave the way for them to participate constructively in their communities and societies.

33. Participants recalled that all children allegedly associated with armed groups and captured in the course of military operations should be treated primarily as victims of recruitment, in accordance with international humanitarian law and international norms and standards pertaining to the rights of the child. There is particular concern for the humanitarian situation of children in north-east Syria's camps. The Conference noted the Secretary-General's call on Member States, and the offer of coordinated assistance from the UN, to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of foreign women and children with suspected family ties to ISIL who are currently in camps in the north-east of the country and in Iraq, in line with international law principles and with respect for the best interests of the child.

Regional support and consequences of the Syria crisis

34. The Conference recognised the progress made by host governments, donors and the UN in delivering on the commitments undertaken at past Conferences, including through the UNHCR-UNDP-led 3RP and the EU-Jordan and EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities. Against a backdrop of continued extreme vulnerability of refugees from Syria and their host communities, more should nevertheless be done to maintain effective protection of refugees, further improve their access to healthcare, education and livelihoods, ensure respect of their basic human rights and legal rights, increase their potential for self-reliance and create opportunities to contribute to the economic development of their host countries. The Conference noted that temporary legal residence is central to refugees' ability to access protection and services. The EU stated its intention to continue to address these needs and to provide assistance to the hosting communities and administrations for enhanced resilience and self-reliance, building *inter alia* on the experience of its Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis¹ and of its Facility for Refugees in Turkey².

35. The international community reconfirmed its unwavering commitment to supporting Syria's neighbours in continuing to address the multiple challenges they face, by sustaining humanitarian aid and resilience support, primarily through the 3RP mechanism and its 270 partners, focused on strengthening national systems and response capacities, livelihoods and the needs of Syrian refugees and host communities. Donors will continue to strengthen the national capacities of Syria's neighbours as well as their ownership and leadership in the response. The Conference recognises the importance of national and local institutions in delivering basic services to communities at a time of increased demand and pledges. The Conference stressed the need for Syria's neighbours to put in place far-sighted planning for recovery from the impact of the Syrian crisis and COVID-19, recalling the need to create the conditions for sustainable economic development and to build back better, adapting to green and digital transformation needs.

36. The Conference praised Turkey for providing the largest refugee population in the world with access to national services such as healthcare, education, social and municipal services, and opportunities for labour market inclusion, thereby shouldering the bulk of the financial costs related to the refugee response. The Conference acknowledged Turkey's intensive efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 and the inclusion of refugees in such efforts. It further commended Turkey for its efforts to foster self-reliance for refugees and social cohesion. Turkey's comprehensive refugee response

¹ The Trust Fund has allocated over €2.3 billion to actions supporting more than 7.8 million refugees in the neighbouring countries and host communities primarily in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. Implementation of activities is due to continue until mid-2025.

² The Facility for Refugees in Turkey mobilised €6 billion. The entire operational budget has been committed and contracted, and more than €4 billion disbursed. This support is project-based, with activities continuing until 2025. In an effort to ensure the continuation of important humanitarian assistance to refugees in Turkey, the EU agreed to mobilise an additional €535 million in 2020.

continues to reflect good practice, lessons learned and valuable experience gained in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as in the framework of the 3RP and of the successful EU-Turkey co-operation through the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

37. The Conference commended the significant and continued efforts made by Lebanon in hosting the highest number of refugees per capita in the world, including efforts to enable refugees' access to public services. It lauded Lebanon's efforts to continue to open schools, social development centres and public health facilities for refugees. The Conference recognised Lebanon's commitments to facilitate the issuance of legal residence permits and therefore access to protection and basic services. Participants recognised the unique situation that is confronting Lebanon and its population due to major challenges stemming from the absence of an empowered government, the severe economic and financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of ten years of conflict in Syria. The explosion in the port of Beirut on 4 August 2020 exacerbated that situation and the Conference welcomed the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF). More than 55 per cent of Lebanon's population is living in poverty, a proportion which rises to 90 per cent in the case of Syrian refugees. Only 4 per cent of registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon are estimated to be food self-sufficient. An increasing number of Lebanese nationals is also affected by food insecurity.

38. The Conference commended the significant and tangible efforts made by Jordan, in particular in terms of extending services including enrolment of Syrian refugees in education, access to labour market and healthcare. It also commended Jordan for launching an inclusive COVID-19 vaccination campaign for both Jordanians and non-Jordanians including Syrian refugees, and for being the first country in the world to provide vaccination in refugee camps. The Conference welcomed Jordan's ambition to forge ahead with a green and digital economic transformation and with structural reforms that would create jobs and improve delivery of social services. It recognised the urgency of maintaining investments in quality social services that are cost-effective, in particular water, health and education, and equitably accessed by host communities and refugees. Expanding social security is also a key priority. Participants also underlined the importance of addressing vulnerabilities at individual, household as well as community levels. The Conference reiterated the readiness of the international community to support Jordan's efforts.

39. The Conference recognised and appreciated Iraq's efforts in hosting and supporting Syrian refugees, mainly in its Kurdistan Region. Participants expressed their commitment to maintaining a high level of support to Iraq in responding to the humanitarian needs resulting from years of conflict, widespread internal displacement and disrupted access to social services, as well as specifically from the Syrian conflict.

40. The Conference recognised and welcomed Egypt's important contribution in hosting Syrian refugees and the inclusive policies adopted by the Egyptian government in terms of health services, education and public services. The Conference also noted Egypt's ongoing efforts to strengthen its asylum system and protect the rights of Syrian refugees.

Accountability and fight against impunity

41. Conference participants expressed concern over the impunity for serious violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights law committed during the conflict in Syria and condemned them in the strongest possible way. They underscored the urgent need to ensure truth, justice and accountability for violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence-enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture, the use of chemical weapons and indiscriminate attacks affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, some of which amount to war crimes and crimes

against humanity. The fight against impunity is both a legal requirement and central to achieving sustainable peace and genuine reconciliation in Syria.

42. The co-chairs commended the important work of the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) and the International Independent and Impartial Mechanism (IIIM). They reiterated their call for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court. In the absence of avenues for international justice, the prosecution of such crimes under national jurisdiction, where possible, can bring an important contribution. The Conference took note of the recent verdict by the higher regional court of Koblenz, in Germany, and of recent steps taken by the Netherlands and Canada under the UN Convention on Torture, to which Syria is a signatory.

43. The co-chairs welcomed the findings of the Board of Inquiry into incidents in north-west Syria as communicated by the Secretary-General and participants recognised the progress in the implementation of its recommendations. They also welcomed the release of the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for the consideration of the Executive Council of the OPCW and the Secretary-General of the United Nations and noted its conclusions with great concern. The co-chairs strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force and reiterated that those identified as responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable for their reprehensible acts in breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Concluding remarks

44. The EU will continue tracking financial commitments made during the Conference, working with the UN as was the case for previous Brussels Conferences, and reporting on progress made in Jordan and Lebanon on key mutual policy commitments from past conferences.

45. The United Nations recalled the Secretary-General's global call for the waiver of sanctions that can undermine the capacity of countries to ensure access to food, essential health supplies and medical health support to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN took note of assurances by relevant States and entities that their sanctions programmes relating to Syria neither banned the flow of humanitarian supplies nor targeted medicine and medical supplies. The EU recalled that its sanctions applying to Syria are designed in accordance with international law and are implemented with a view to avoiding any negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian aid, including essential medical equipment and supplies necessary to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and limit its spread worldwide.

46. The Conference reiterated the importance of Security Council Resolution 2165 (2014) and subsequent resolutions in ensuring that "humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, reaches people in need throughout Syria through the most direct routes." After ten years of conflict and a deepening humanitarian situation, with rising needs in 2021 exacerbated by COVID-19 and the economic decline, the need for cross-border access remains as pressing today as it has ever been.

47. Donor countries and the EU reiterated that reconstruction and international support for its implementation will only be possible once a credible political solution, consistent with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva Communiqué, is firmly underway. A successful reconstruction process also requires minimal conditions for stability and inclusiveness, a democratic and inclusive government guaranteeing people's safety and security, an agreed conflict-sensitive development strategy, reliable and legitimate interlocutors as well as guarantees in terms of funding accountability. Syria currently fulfils none of these conditions.