UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR,
VALERIE AMOS

REMARKS TO THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT REGIONAL
CONSULTATION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
AMMAN, 3 MARCH 2015

As delivered

Thank you very much. Good morning everyone.

Your Excellency Mr. Nasser Judeh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan,

Your Excellency Ambassador Dr. Badr Eddin Al-Alali, Assistant Secretary General of the League of Arab States,

Your Excellency Ambassador Hisham Yousef, Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,

Ms. Alia Al-Dalli, our Moderator for the Conference,

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you all very much indeed.

And Alia, just to say that I have just agreed with the Secretary General that I will stay for another two months, so until the end of May, although my dear friend, the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister said I should be staying for another three years to shock all of you, but it’s only two months until the end of May.

Thank you all very much and I would like to join fellow speakers in welcoming you to this regional consultation in preparation for the May 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

My particular thanks to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting this event, and to the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation for co-chairing, and to all of you for being here.

The global humanitarian system has come under increasing strain in the past decade. Humanitarian needs around the world are rising beyond our capacity to cope.

Urbanization, population growth, environmental degradation, conflict, climate change and resource scarcity are adding to the consequences of underdevelopment, rising levels of poverty and increasing inequality. Natural disasters do more damage, last longer, and in many places recur before people have even had a chance to recover. More people are displaced by...
conflict than at any time since 1945. This is the background to the Secretary-General’s decision to convene the first ever World Humanitarian Summit next year.

If we look at this region, in the past four and a half years, the people of the Middle East and North Africa have witnessed significant and tumultuous changes that have had an impact on everyone.

Millions of people, from Libya to Palestine, from Yemen to Syria and Iraq, have had their lives completely overturned by violence. And because the numbers are so big, they do little to convey the trauma experienced by people whose lives have been uprooted by conflict, violence and displacement. In Syria alone, more than 200,000 people have died, countless more have been injured and more than 11 million people have fled their homes.

In Iraq, 2.4 million people have fled from their homes since January 2014. In Yemen, nearly two-thirds of the population need support. In Libya, 400,000 people are internally displaced. And in the occupied Palestinian territory, more than 1.6 million people are in need of humanitarian aid, following decades of conflict and displacement.

These are conflicts which have an impact far beyond the individual country; they are regional.

Syria’s neighbours have shown incredible hospitality and generosity towards those who have fled across border. Jordan has provided shelter to hundreds of thousands of refugees, amounting to over 10 per cent of its population. In Lebanon, a quarter of the population are now Syrians. Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and other countries in North Africa have all been affected. Shouldering this burden is putting a strain on public services, infrastructure and the economies of these countries.

Kuwait has generously hosted two pledging conferences for Syrians in need, with a third scheduled later this month. The first saw 43 Member States pledge $1.5 billion towards humanitarian efforts; the second saw 39 Member States pledge $2.4 billion, with Kuwait leading the way.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia contributed $500 million for Iraqis in need last year, enabling UN agencies and humanitarian partners to respond with food, shelter, medical services, water and basic household items.

The people and Governments of this region have contributed to humanitarian action through national campaigns. The UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia raised tens of millions of dollars for Syrian and Iraqi refugees during the recent winter storms. Ordinary people, in the region and through diaspora networks, are generously contributing to response efforts.

Regional organizations, national and international NGOs, private companies, academia, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and diaspora groups are also playing their part and are also active beyond the region, for example in Somalia and Sudan, and are playing a significant part in global humanitarian action.

I welcome the strengthened relationships and networks between humanitarian organizations, the private sector and others in this region over the past five years.
partnerships have brought knowledge, additional capacity and expertise to our global humanitarian efforts.

We need grassroots involvement in humanitarian affairs more than ever, and we need to focus on putting people front and centre of our response efforts.

Given the brutal and systematic targeting of civilians in conflicts, we need to think through what more we need to do to end the climate of impunity. We need new to come up with new ideas on how best to protect civilians, safeguard access, and reinforce international humanitarian and human rights law.

We also need to address the growing gap between humanitarian needs and the funds available to meet them.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We face a world full of complexity and challenge but we do have opportunities to promote and deliver a more peaceful, prosperous, stable and sustainable future for all.

The World Humanitarian Summit is one such opportunity.

We must make the most of it. We must speak openly about the challenges, but we must think about solutions. We have a chance to transform the way we work and create a diverse and truly inclusive global humanitarian system.

I hope you will have frank discussions and come up with innovative ideas which can be fed into the Summit conclusions.

Thank you again for being here, and I look forward to a fruitful consultation.