EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR’S KEY MESSAGES ON SYRIA
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I. Key Messages

1. I have seen first-hand the devastation in the Baba Amr area of Homs, where most buildings have been destroyed by shelling. The whereabouts and condition of the tens of thousands of people who lived in Baba Amr is of extreme concern. We need to know what has happened to them and whether they have shelter, food and water. We also need to know where the wounded are and whether they are getting medical treatment. As fighting, shelling, and other violence intensifies in Idlib, Homs and other places in Syria, the risk of a grave humanitarian crisis grows.

2. It is vitally important that we are able to reach people in need, so that we can provide lifesaving help. The Syrian authorities have agreed to facilitate a joint preliminary assessment exercise with UN agencies this week. This is a minimal start. A robust and regular arrangement must be put in place, which allows humanitarian organizations unhindered access to evacuate the wounded and deliver desperately needed supplies, especially in places where fighting is ongoing. I urge the Government of Syria to consider our proposal with the utmost urgency.

3. Until regular, daily access is granted, humanitarian partners continue to provide assistance to those they are able to reach. A response plan for the next three months is being developed, which focuses on extending current programmes to reach an increased number of people. The most pressing needs outlined in the plan are protection of civilians and access to medical care and food, as well as the restoration of basic social services and livelihoods.

4. Hundreds of people continue to arrive every day in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan as they flee the violence. These Governments are to be commended for keeping their borders open, as well as for their support for refugees and the displaced. It is essential that humanitarian organizations and the international community remain flexible and ready to reinforce staffing, supplies and funding, in our collective effort to support people in distress in Syria and those who have fled to other countries.

5. I call on all Member States to continue to ensure that the humanitarian response and negotiations for humanitarian access are clearly separated from political discussions. Unless humanitarian workers are perceived as genuinely neutral and impartial, it will be impossible for us to serve the needs of people in desperate need and speak out for them credibly. The people of Syria need our help, and they need it now.