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

1. The humanitarian situation in Syria is already catastrophic and is getting worse. Four million people face unrelenting violence and human rights violations including widespread sexual violence. Lack of food and denial of access to medical treatment, inadequate shelter and heating during a very harsh winter are taking their toll. At least 60,000 people have been killed in this conflict and in less than a year the number of people needing aid has quadrupled. Thousands continue to cross borders every day. Ordinary people are paying a heavy price for the failure of the international community to agree steps to resolve the political crisis.

2. Despite constant calls for all parties to abide by international humanitarian law, and not to target civilians, we continue to see the terrible damage caused by heavy weapons in urban centres. People live in constant fear of bombing. We have reports that whole towns and neighbourhoods have been emptied or destroyed and more than 650,000 people have fled the country. Everyone who can influence the parties in this conflict must do their utmost to secure an end to the fighting and the protection of civilians caught in the middle of the conflict.

3. Humanitarian agencies are trying to reach as many of the vulnerable and displaced as we can. We are feeding 1.5 million people and providing basic relief supplies for some 400,000 people. Despite the extremely dangerous security environment they face every day, humanitarian workers continue their efforts. We have established operational hubs outside Damascus, taken steps to strengthen humanitarian leadership and coordination on the ground and have worked out new agreements with the authorities on fuel imports. But it is just not enough. The needs continue to grow and we cannot keep pace.

4. The magnitude, urgency and increasing complexity of this crisis means that we are using every available resource and channel to scale up our aid operations. We continue to work with the Government of Syria and other parties to the conflict to gain access – however we can – to people in areas we still cannot reach and who are receiving too little too late. All parties to the conflict must allow us access and must protect aid workers: failure to do so contravenes international law.

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The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

Celebrating 20 years of coordinated humanitarian action
5. The governments and people of neighbouring countries and across North Africa continue to care for families fleeing Syria, while themselves facing serious economic difficulties and extreme weather conditions. Most of the refugees are women and children, who arrive with nothing, fearing for the safety of family, friends and homes back in Syria. I thank those countries for keeping their borders open and ask donors to provide them with adequate funds to support the refugees.

6. The humanitarian community has requested US$1.5 billion to help displaced people and the communities hosting them across Syria and refugees in neighbouring countries for the next six months. This is the largest ever short-term appeal issued and indicates the scale and urgency of the situation. If we do not receive these funds we will not be able to reach the poorest and most vulnerable families who so desperately need life-saving help.