

**H.E. Dr. Ahmed Al-Meraikhi**

**Remarks at the Brussels Syria Conference**

**Thematic Event - Humanitarian aid inside Syria: needs, challenges & the way forward**

**4 April 2017, Brussels**

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ministers, Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me to begin by thanking the European Union, United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, State of Qatar, State of Kuwait and the United Nations for hosting this timely and important event. The legacy of the State of Kuwait started in 2013 and continues this year but now a number of co-hosts also join hands evidencing the desire for a unified humanitarian response. Today's event provides a much-needed platform for the international community to express their solidarity with the Syrian people and remind them that they are not forgotten.

In the four months since I have assumed the role as the UN Secretary-General's Humanitarian Envoy, I have not only advocated for support to humanitarian action but also emphasized that those who can influence should show their support for a sustainable solution. A political solution bolstered by humanitarian support is the only way we can alleviate the sufferings of the Syrian people.

Last month, I visited Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon where it was abundantly clear that while bloodshed inside Syria continues and the humanitarian needs of suffering Syrian refugees who risk their lives and the lives of their families to

escape violence increases daily. I saw families in temporary settlements and in camps desperate the return home, however, six years of crisis and war has left no or little infrastructure in Syria and people are struggling with basic services.

Lack of humanitarian access, inside Syria, is of a great concern to the humanitarian community supporting the Syrian people in need. While the political talks continue to find a sustainable solution, safe, rapid, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access remains vital. Administrative hurdles, insecurity and lack of facilitation by the parties limits the provision of an adequate and regular humanitarian assistance especially to those who live in besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

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I would like to use this opportunity to remind us all the importance of principled and needs-based humanitarian assistance which is depoliticised and is within the framework of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. I have discussed the Syrian issue in meetings across the Gulf with leadership, stakeholders and humanitarian actors. I am also pleased to relay that they are all very supportive to a principled humanitarian response to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people and each meeting left me feeling hopeful for continued support. I am thankful to those Gulf countries who have recently allocated resources to the UN, particularly Kuwait two weeks ago, Qatar last week, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

An estimated 4.7 million people live in hard-to-reach areas, with about 30% of these in ISIL controlled areas. Only a handful international and national NGOs have access to these people. NGOs, both within Syria and in the neighbouring

countries, are playing a crucial role in the humanitarian response for Syria, including from cross-border, and it is important that all parties and donors recognize their contributions. Those that have the influence should do all possible to support the Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan and these NGOs both financially and administratively.

Immediate humanitarian needs are a priority, however, resilience building of the Syrian people is essential to ensure their sustainable future. The crisis has left 4 out of 5 people inside Syria in poverty, and 1 out of 3 people in Syria face food insecurity. Therefore, it is important to work together to ensure a better livelihood for the Syrian people. I believe that the NGOs particularly from Syria, who have exhibited such adaptability and have quickly developed their capacity, can play a vital role in rebuilding Syria, and coupled with the immense efforts of the UN and its partners Syria will have a future.

In Doha two days ago, I convened a meeting with NGOs and charities from the GCC, Turkey, Jordan and representatives from the Syrian NGOs. Where I was reinvigorated with hope to hear from the Gulf humanitarian organizations that they are ready and willing to work with all humanitarian actors including the Syrian National NGOs for an effective and better humanitarian response inside Syria.

The participants also stressed the importance of supporting humanitarian initiatives that would enhance the self-sufficiency of the Syrian civil society, such as strengthening the role of the civil administration in providing services to citizens, supporting the capacities of the Syrian civil society, building the educational and health systems and ensuring their sustainability as appropriate with the realities and challenges of the crisis in mind. In addition, there is an

urgent need for a common vision where priority is given to strengthening the capabilities of the Syrian people to withstand this protracted humanitarian crisis. Past experience has shown that the continuation of the current method of assistance, which involves the provision of minimum life-sustaining services and aid dependency, has left Syrians to fend for themselves without cohesion and resilience to survive. That is why we must move towards strengthening the ability of the Syrian people to respond on their own and decrease dependency.

I would like to once again thank the organizers and co-hosts for giving me the opportunity to speak at this important forum and reiterate that we should all work together in coordinated efforts to support our Syrian brothers and sisters.

Thank you.