



Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries

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MINUTES

of the meeting of 12 November 2012, from 16.30 to 18.00
Brussels

The meeting opened at 16.30 on Monday, 12 November 2012, with Mario David (Chair) in the chair.

1. Adoption of draft agenda (PE 490.213)

The draft agenda was adopted

2. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2012 (PE 490.212)

The minutes were adopted

3. Chair's announcements**4. Exchange of views on Syrian refugees in the presence of**

- **Mr. Panos Moutziz**, UNHCR Regional Refugee Coordinator for Syria
- **Mr. Radouane Nouicer**, UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria
- **Ms Isabelle Seroin**, Head of the Mediterranean and Middle East sector, DG ECHO, European Commission

Mr Nauticer (UN) mentioned the humanitarian situation in Syria is getting worse each day and it is the Syrian civilians who pay the price of this ugly conflict. The civilians pay the price in three dimensions: The consecutive displacement of millions of civilians. The physical and economic losses as number of deaths and injured people are increasing each day and houses, schools and hospitals are destroyed. The economic decline has led to loss of livelihoods for many Syrian families including unemployment and loss of educated people. The situation of the refugees who already have been living in Syria before the conflict like Palestinians, Sudanese, Somalis and Afghans are also getting worse. Prices are skyrocketing and many schools are serving as collective shelters for the displaced people. People are either living in tent camps mainly along the borders or in parks or in abandoned buildings. There are around 300 thousand children traumatized because of not going to school and witnessing everyday horrible acts taking place in their surroundings. The Syrian opposition is very fragmented and

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some groups are getting radicalized. Another cause for concern is the aggravating conflict especially in the North, Aleppo and in Yarmuk within the Kurdish and Palestinian groups themselves along the pro-regime and anti-regime camps. There has been one humanitarian response plan prepared by the UN agencies working in Syria, initially requiring \$180 million and revised in September requiring \$348 million to address the very urgent needs for humanitarian assistance. So far UN gathered 50% of this amount and there is an urgent need for contributions particularly to address the creeping up winter. There are 57 projects covering 10 sectors; 8 UN agencies and 8 international NGOs working inside Syria, and 90 local NGOs are supporting the UN activities. Humanitarian assistance faces difficulties to access to certain regions because of ongoing hostilities. Lack of international partnerships from outside is also a problem as the Syrian authorities are preventing their access they are not sure of their objectivity. Immediate priority is the winter package which requires \$60 million to address various needs of 1.2 million people and until now only \$20 million is received. Protection of civilians is the main concern but UN's hands are tied. There is a serious need to enlarge the donor base. Upon a question (Mr Vajgl), he mentioned that Israel has rather disassociate itself from the conflict and humanitarian aspects and Gulf countries have been rather interested in political and military aspect of the conflict but not much in providing humanitarian support. EP's contribution to the situation would be to reiterate its calls for an effective and swift solution of the crisis and more funding.

Mr Moutzis (UNHCR) conveyed the serious frustration among the relief agencies for the lack of political solution which led them continuously revise the humanitarian response plan to deal with Syrian refugees. There are around 410 thousand refugees who are registered or assisted between Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey and each day thousands of refugees keep on crossing the borders into the neighbouring countries. 75% of the refugees are women and children. He highlighted that given the significant number of children among refugees (50%), "this is a children crisis" full of heartbreaking stories. Therefore humanitarian assistance not only tries to response to the material needs but also to provide appropriate physico-social support to the traumatised children. First priority for the humanitarian agencies is to ensure that the borders are open, which luckily has been the case as the neighbouring countries have kept the borders open. However the incoming refugees also come with a high risk given the high political and economic fragility in the neighbouring countries like Lebanon and Jordan. In Lebanon there are over 110 thousand refugees registered by UNHCR and they stay with host communities. In Jordan there are around 118 thousand registered refugees living mainly in camps and host communities. Iraq hosts 50 thousand refugees (80% Kurdish) mainly in the Kurdish area. Turkey is the only country which adopted temporary protection legal status and now hosts around 120 thousand refugees in camps 70 thousand in urban areas with providing generous help packages. UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies also provide assistance in various aspects in the neighbouring countries. However they are concerned by the low level of international funding and help to prepare the winter package (only 35% is funded). As the conflict continues the humanitarian situation will get worse and the need for support will increase.

Ms Seroin (DG ECHO) stated that ECHO has operating over 3 axes of action:

(1) Mobilizing funding: Since the beginning of 2012 ECHO mobilized €96 million for the Syria crisis used to support the humanitarian partners, to distribute food and non-food assistance, to provide shelters, water and sanitation etc. 60% ECHO funding goes inside Syria and 40% to neighbouring countries. Apart from this, there has been also some contribution for the host countries from the EU financing instruments like ENP and European instrument for stability and EU Member States. €258 million in total.

(2) Taking coordination initiatives: co-facilitating with UNHCR and Syria Humanitarian Forum, which is a forum meeting every two months in Geneva with key stakeholders on Syria crisis and UN Member states including Syria, China, Russia to discuss the implementations regarding the humanitarian and refugee crisis in Syria. Setting up and functioning of the forum has not been an easy process as at the beginning Syria opposed the process. Yet it is very important in a very politicized context to keep humanitarian track separate from political track. Ms Kristalina Georgieva calls for high level meeting with the traditional and new donors at the UN General Assembly and DG ECHO holds monthly meetings with member states and key stakeholders.

(3) Advocating for access and the respect of the humanitarian workers inside Syria and respect of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. She mentioned that footprint of the humanitarian community recently increased in Syria.

She mentioned that ECHO is also concerned by the low level of global funding. Some countries are reluctant to provide humanitarian assistance as the government is also involved in the delivery of the assistance, which raises concerns for neutrality of the delivery. Humanitarian assistance's impartiality should be ensured so that support can reach to the people who are in need. Only politics can resolve the situation in Syria. In the absence of political solution, much of the burden will continue to fall on humanitarian assistance.

5. Exchange of views on the situation in Lebanon

Mr Ahmad Fatfat from the Lebanese Parliament (Future Movement) emphasized that current Lebanese government represents an alliance between Hezbollah and Assad regime in Syria. Although government sought to disassociate Lebanon from the conflict in Syria to maintain stability within Lebanon, despite several requests from the opposition, government refuses to deploy army along the Lebanese frontier to block the transit of armed convoys and others across the border. He criticised Hezbollah (militias) for getting involved in the conflict in Syria, for not handing over its arms and for refusing to respect national justice and refusing to confess various political assassinations including Mr Hariri's. He highlighted the serious threats to politicians in Lebanon which is also evident in the recent assassination of security chief Mr Hassan and expects that these threats would come to an end and perpetrators of the assassinations are brought to justice. He mentioned that they heard threats that Hezbollah will try to disrupt the holding of the elections if they are not happy with the electoral law. Against these threats he requested the EU and international community to send an observation mission to the May 2013 elections. He criticized the Prime Minister and some other politicians for creating a political void in Lebanon as they might resign before having another government. To avoid this political void, he expects that a new government made of technocrats will take over the rule with clearly defined objectives and he expects that international community would support this process. Threats of the Syria crisis over Lebanon's security and stability are worse than they already feared.

Mr Jan Snidauf (EEAS) mentioned about the close and high level cooperation between EU and Lebanon. EU is content that Lebanon disassociates itself from the Syria crisis and national dialogue has resumed under the president of Lebanon. Clashes erupted in different parts of the country since summer are worrying and risk of spreading of the Syrian conflict to Lebanon is high.

6. Any other business

7. Date and place of next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be communicated by the Secretariat

The meeting closed at 18.00.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/
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Mário David	
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/Képviselők/ Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter	
Raimon Obiols, Ivo Vajgl	
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Supplenti/ Aizstājēji/Pavaduojantys nariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleantî/Náhradníci/Namestniki/ Varajäsenet/Suppleanter	

187 (2)	
193 (3)	
49 (6) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/Päevakorra punkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkės punktas/ Napirendi pont/Punt fuq l-aġenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/ Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)	
Panos Moutzsis, Radouane Nouicer, Isabelle Seroin	4
Ahmad Fatfat	5

Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Osservatori/
Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Observatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/
Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

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Su invito del presidente/Pēc priekšsēdētāja uzaicinājuma/Pirmininkui pakvietus/Az elnök meghívására/Fuq stedina tal-President/
Op uitnodiging van de voorzitter/Na zaproszenie Przewodniczącego/A convite do Presidente/La invitația președintelui/Na pozwanie
predsedu/Na povabilo predsednika/Puheenjohtajan kutsusta/På ordförandens inbjudan

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Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (*)

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Kummissjoni/Commissie/Komisja/Comissão/Comisie/Komisia/Komissio/Kommissionen (*)

b. Mukencieshayi, Daniela Cernone

Европейска служба за външна дейност/Европскá služba pro vnější činnost/EU-Udenrigstjenesten/Europäischer Auswärtiger
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avdelningen för yttre åtgärd (*)

Jan Snidauf, Nicolas Levine, Rina Rasmussen

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Rima Taraby, Barakat Ghattas, Hussein Sabbagh, Rudolf El-Kareh, Issa Abdelaziz, Gemil Tahrali,

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Maria Panmieri

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