Humanitarian Access in Syria

Side Event to the Brussels IV Conference

Participants

Members of the Humanitarian task force (HTF) and ISSG

Overview

In preparation to the Brussels IV Conference on Syria scheduled on 30 June 2020, DG ECHO organised a side event on Humanitarian Access in Syria, building on the past Senior Official Meetings. Due to COVID-19 constraints, the meeting took place virtually. The discussion sought to assess the current and future challenges to deliver humanitarian assistance to those most in need, bringing together the key stakeholders in the Syria humanitarian response.

The meeting was opened by DG ECHO Director-General Vivi Michou and chaired by DG ECHO Deputy-Director General Michael Koehler. Panellists representing the three main humanitarian families (the UN, NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) outlined the most prominent issues facing Syrian, access to people in need, and people’s access to services. Presentations were followed by interventions from the floor. Statements highlighted concerns about the dire humanitarian situation in Syria, as well as the need and willingness to strengthen support to the crisis, with a view to enhancing humanitarian access and alleviating the suffering caused by more than 9 years of conflict. Particular concern about the North West of the country and the possible non-renewal of the UN Security Council Resolution was highlighted.
Conclusions

The following recommendations and asks emerged from the meeting.

1. **Put people first**: continue the commitment to affected communities. The current politicized environment must leave space to humanitarian operations.

2. Make the humanitarian response **fit for purpose**: continue and adapt the response to people’s needs and to the compounding elements of COVID-19. This includes strengthening protection (stand-alone protection programming or better protection mainstreaming), COVID-specific programming, education, shelter, self-resilience, maintaining preparedness for renewed fighting in Northwest Syria and continuing the effort to be as close as possible to the people in need. Maintain the whole of Syria coordination structure.

3. Ensure timely, flexible and sufficient **resourcing** across all 3 pillars of the Humanitarian Response Plan and for all modalities.

4. Continue dialogue on **restrictive measures** with a view to avoiding any negative impact on humanitarian aid and civilians.

5. Respect **international humanitarian law**. This includes protecting civilians and humanitarian workers.

6. **Lift restrictions** on humanitarian access in all areas of Syria. This includes assisting humanitarian actors in advocating for the lifting of restrictions.

7. Advocate for the **Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement’s** access to all areas of Syria including in Idlib.

8. Maintain **multiple modalities** to deliver humanitarian assistance (cross-line, cross-border and regular programming). They are complementary. In this context,
   
a. it is imperative to maintain cross-border access by renewing UNSC resolution 2165 for at least 12 months.

   b. reauthorize UN cross-border assistance through Yarubiyah, as a critical way to ensure that vital medical and other supplies are available to populations in Northeast Syria.

   c. support efforts to ensure increased principled and sustainable cross-line access from Government controlled areas.