

Dear Minister Mitchell,

We, the undersigned organisations, are writing to appeal urgently for your support and commitment to addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria at the **Seventh Brussels Conference on 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region'** on 14 and 15 June 2023. As representatives of organisations working with affected communities, we have witnessed the **devastating impact of the recent earthquakes in Syria, further exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation**. It is crucial that we take immediate action to address the urgent needs of the affected populations.

As you know, the earthquakes that impacted Syria and Türkiye on 6 February 2023 caused widespread destruction and loss of life. Families who have already experienced displacement multiple times due to the ongoing conflict are now facing additional hardships and struggling to meet even their basic needs. It has never been more important to view the needs of communities across Syria through a lens that seeks to *prevent* further harm, not just respond to it. The international community must act swiftly and decisively to provide the necessary support and resources to address this crisis.

In light of these circumstances, we call upon the UK Government to take immediate action by:

- **Reinstating Official Development Assistance (ODA) budgets for Syria:** UK pledges to Syria have fallen year on year, from £400m in 2019 to £158 in 2022, a decrease of 60%. We urge you to reverse the cuts to the ODA budgets for Syria, acknowledging the critical importance of sustained support in addressing the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the specific needs emerging from the recent earthquake, ensuring impartiality by using an evidence based approach to identify needs.
- **Increasing financial commitments:** We urge the UK to increase its financial commitments to Syria. We recognise the previous contributions amounting to over £3.7 billion since 2012. However, the severity of the crisis demands a more substantial commitment to ensure the provision of essential services, including healthcare, education, protection, and livelihood support to affected communities.
- **Prioritising early recovery and resilience:** The UK should allocate new funds towards early recovery in the aftermath of the earthquake response. This includes supporting infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihood restoration, and ensuring access to essential services to facilitate the recovery and resilience of affected communities, by placing a needs-based inclusive approach at the bedrock of the response.
- **Returning ODA to 0.7% GNI.** Reinstated support to Syria should not come at the expense of other emergencies.
- **Ensuring sustained and unhindered humanitarian access:** We urge the UK to explore and use all access modalities to ensure that people in need receive assistance. There must be sufficient access to assistance for communities across all affected areas of northern Syria, in response to their needs, regardless of lines of political control. This includes by ensuring sustained and regular cross-border assistance to North West Syria through the UN Security Council Resolution 2672, and other access points, alongside advocacy for the continuation of this lifeline through the renewal of the resolution in July, and supporting cross line efforts within Syria.

We stand ready to collaborate with the UK Government and support its efforts in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria. We kindly request an opportunity to meet with you or your representatives to further discuss the pressing needs and potential solutions.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We eagerly await your positive response and commitment to addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Yours sincerely,

ActionAid UK: Mike Noyes and Hannah Bond, Co-Directors of Policy, Advocacy and Programmes  
Action Against Hunger UK, Jean Michel Grand, Executive Director  
Action For Humanity: Othman Moqbel, CEO  
Age International: Ken Bluestone, Head of Policy and Influencing  
CAFOD: Rhea Tariq, Deputy Director of International Programmes  
Christian Aid: Osai Ojigho, Director of Policy and Public Campaigns  
Humanity & Inclusion UK, George Graham, Chief Executive  
International Rescue Committee: Laura Kyrke Smith, Executive Director UK  
Mercy Corps in Europe, Harpinder Collacott, Executive Director  
SCIAF/ Caritas Scotland: Alistair Dutton, CEO  
Save the Children UK: Kirsty McNeill, Executive Director Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns