

Statement from Lebanon civil society delegation at the conclusion of the Brussels III Conference:

Sustained response to help people affected by the Syria crisis in Lebanon required while solution to the conflict remains elusive

While welcoming a substantial level of funding pledged at the *Supporting Syria and the Region Conference* in Brussels today, Lebanon NGO networks and academics warned that with a lack of progress to find a political solution and address the ongoing protection threats in Syria that act as barriers to refugee return, a sustained and inclusive response to the crisis in Lebanon remains vital.

Speaking at the close of the conference, **Dr Nasser Yassin, Director of Research at the Issam Fares Institute, American University of Beirut**, said: *“the majority of refugees want to return to Syria, but they will only do so when they trust that they will be safe. The Brussels Conference has yet again shone a light on the ongoing human rights abuses across the country that continue to act as barriers to refugees’ ability to return. The EU and international community need to actively and assertively engage to find a political solution in Syria by addressing the root causes of the conflict. A sustained response to the crisis in Lebanon is also essential: we need to see an increase in multi-year donor funding so that operational actors can work to build resilience across Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian communities as well as seeking to meet immediate needs”.*

Pledges for the humanitarian response inside Syria and neighbouring countries were made at the conference including by the EU (560m Euros), USA (\$397m), Kuwait (\$300m), multi-year commitments from France & Germany and contributions by a wide range of other donor governments.

NGO members of the **Lebanese NGO Forum, People Affected by the Syria Crisis (PASC) network** and **Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF)** acknowledged that the funding pledged in Brussels is a vitally important part of the picture for the response in Lebanon. However, previous policy commitments made at Conferences must also be upheld if the Brussels process is to lead to a tangible improvement in people’s lives. At Brussels III, the civil society delegation participated in policy discussions on education, socio-economic recovery, protection, supporting youth and justice and accountability.

“The number of resettlement places offered by third countries have nose-dived in the last two years and barely received a mention in the Brussels III Conference. In the spirit of responsibility-sharing we need to urgently see resettlement places increased, alongside action from the Government of Lebanon to protect refugees, including through expanding access to residency, promoting respect for the rule of law by local actors including to prevent unlawful evictions, while upholding the principle of non-refoulement”, said **George Ghali, with the People Affected by the Syria Crisis (PASC) Network**.

Caroline Bouvard, Chair of the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF), said: *“eight years into the crisis, despite ongoing international funding, 42% of compulsory school age Syrian refugee children are out of school in Lebanon. Refugees’ shelter conditions are worsening with more people forced to live in unsanitary and unsafe structures, while shouldering crippling debt. Poor Lebanese and Palestinians continue to face the brunt of the crisis as well. Based on multi-year funding, we need to work together to improve the planning and delivery of a response that meets vulnerable peoples’ basic needs, supports Lebanese infrastructure and seeks to enhance the social fabric in Lebanon for now and the future.”*

Notes:

Over 40 civil society delegates from Lebanon attended the Days of Dialogue in Brussels as part of the *Supporting the future of Syria and the Region Conference*

The Lebanese NGO Forum, People Affected by the Syria Crisis (PASC) Network and Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF) include over 100 national and international NGOs operating in Lebanon.