Media Alert

Government of Finland and UN convene Conference to save lives, strengthen protection and build resilience in response to the Syria Crisis

Helsinki – The Government of Finland will bring together key humanitarian and development stakeholders on 23 and 24 January in Helsinki to discuss the response to the protracted crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries, now into its sixth year.

The Helsinki Conference on Supporting Syrians and the Region will gather senior representatives of Governments in the region; UN agencies; international financial institutions; donors; representatives of international and national non-governmental organizations; and the private sector.

The conference will focus on key humanitarian priorities inside Syria, where over 13.5 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance; strengthening protection for the more than 4.8 million refugees from Syria now in neighboring countries; and building resilience inside Syria as well as for the more than 4.4 million vulnerable people in neighbouring countries.

The conference will:

- Provide an overview on key humanitarian priorities for Syria in 2017, coordinated by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); and

- Launch the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2017 and 2018, coordinated by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

High-level representatives of Finland scheduled to participate include: HE Juha Sipilä, Prime Minister; HE Kai Mykkänen, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development; and HE Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

High-level representatives of the United Nations scheduled to participate include: Stephen O’Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA; Filippo Grandi, High Commissioner for Refugees; Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator.


What: Helsinki Conference on Supporting Syrians and the Region

When: A joint press conference will be held on 24 January, from 12:00pm to 12:30 pm, bringing together a representative of the Government of Finland, and three Principals of UN Agencies: Stephen O’Brien, OCHA; Filippo Grandi, UNHCR; and Helen Clark, UNDP.

Three additional components will be open to media. Details, timing and access to be confirmed.

- Nordic Innovation Day, 23 January – solution-oriented workshop bringing together UN Agencies and Nordic NGOs as well as the private sector. Media are welcome to opening session only.
- Side Events – 23 and 24 January – timing TBD -- including roundtables and the launch of reports related to resilience programming and lessons learnt in post-conflict processes that could apply to future reconstruction efforts in Syria as the conflict evolves. Also an event organized by Finnish civil society organisations on supporting bottom-up community resilience in Syria.


Where: The venue for the Plenary Session, High Level Panels and press conference is Säätytalo (House of the Estates), Snellmaninkatu 9-11, Helsinki, Finland. Side Events and the Nordic Innovation Day will take place at the Marina Congress Center, Katajanokanlaituri 6, Helsinki.

The Helsinki Conference builds on the Supporting Syrians and the Region Conference, held in London in February 2016; the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016; and the UN High-Level Meeting on Displacement and Migration at the United Nations General Assembly in September of the same year.

Media wishing to schedule interviews with key participants may contact:

Finland:

Media Arrangements: Content and Communications Specialist Mari Lankinen, mari.lankinen@formin.fi, +358 40 7431887
For the CSO Side Event: Minna Saarnivaara, minna.saarnivaara@felm.org, +358-50-5178396
Minister Mykkänen’s advisor: Mr. Pasi Rajala, tel. +358 400 464 393
Minister Soini’s advisor: Ms. Riikka Taivassalo, tel. +358 46 923 4581
Desk officer for Syria, Mr. Jussi Nummelin, tel. +358 295 351 768
Desk officer for humanitarian aid for Syria is Ms. Noora Rikalainen, tel. +358 295 351 310

United Nations Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs:

In Amman: David Swanson: swanson@un.org; +962-791-417-882
In Geneva: Jens Laerke: laerke@un.org; + 41 (0)79 472 9750
In New York: Russell Geekie: geekie@un.org; +1 917 331 0393

United Nations High Commission for Refugees:

In Geneva: Matthew Saltmarsh: saltmars@unhcr.org; +41 79 217 3140
In Amman: Scott Craig: craigs@unhcr.org; +962 7 9276 0640

United Nations Development Programme:

In Finland: Anja Karppinen: anja.karppinen@undp.org; +358 4457 50 368
In Oslo: Trygve Olfarnes: Trygve.olfarnes@undp.org; +47 9415 6028
In New York: Theodore Murphy: Theodore.murphy@undp.org; +1-718-915-2097
In Amman: Noeman AlSayyad: Noeman.alsayyad@undp.org; +962 79 567 2901