

On the global emergency response following the Türkiye and Syria earthquakes

The Congress of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party convening in Stockholm, Sweden on 26-28 May 2023:

Notes that:

- The devastating 7.8-magnitude earthquake, which hit the regions near the Türkiye-Syria border in the early hours of Monday 6 February 2023, was one of the biggest natural disasters in the European neighbourhood for the past century and had a catastrophic impact on the region;
- At least 55,000 people lost their lives, many more have been injured or missing. Thousands of buildings have collapsed, leaving millions homeless in the harsh winter conditions. Schools and hospitals have been destroyed, production and industrial centres in Turkey, providing jobs ceased to exist. According to the WHO the crisis could affect 23 million people - including 1.4 million children;
- Türkiye is home to the largest refugee population in the world, with close to 4 million people from neighbouring Syria, many of whom resided in the affected regions and have lost everything, again;
- Response efforts have been hampered by the sheer scale of the disaster, stark weather conditions, and subsequent aftershocks, as well as the difficulties of delivering aid to northwest Syria, where nearly 5 million people were already relying on humanitarian assistance to subsist;
- The general population of Europe at large mobilised and showed solidarity – from hundreds of trucks bringing first aid donations from Sweden, Germany, Bulgaria, Romania, Montenegro, Switzerland, and Kosovo, to the British public, who raised over £50 million in just two days in response to the humanitarian disaster. Even war-torn Ukraine organised support and sent a unit of 87 people to assist with the rescue;
- Most EU governments however are falling short of the UN pledge to raise official development assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of GNI, with an OECD average, which never exceeded 0.4%. In the UK, the Liberal Democrats enshrined the 0.7% of GNI target in law in 2015, but are the only major UK political party to oppose the decision to abandon it, as this hampers the ability to respond to humanitarian emergencies;
- The governments of Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden pledged to facilitate visa rules, easing and accelerating the processing time for Turkish and Syrian citizens affected by the earthquake;
- The European Union under the guidance of the liberal Commissioner Janez Lenarčič has led a significant effort of search and rescue

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operations through the EU civil protection mechanism - one of the largest emergency operations since its creation in 2001 - following the emergency operation in response to the war in Ukraine. 21 EU Member States and 3 Participating States offered 38 response teams, consisting of 1,750 persons and 111 search and rescue dogs. Hundreds of volunteers flocked to the ground in search of survivors. In total, close to €12 million of EU humanitarian aid has been allocated to respond to the immediate needs of the population in Türkiye, and some €10 million has been immediately mobilised to respond to the immediate consequences of the earthquake in Syria;

- In addition to the rapid emergency assistance, the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, together with the Swedish Presidency, hosted “Together for the people of Türkiye and Syria” International Donors' Conference in March, where a total of €7 billion were pledged by the international community, in support of the people of Türkiye and Syria, with the European Commission, EU Member States, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development accounting for about 50% of the total pledge;
- Swift and strong emergency support to countries affected of natural disasters, is not only an important diplomatic tool, but also a matter of humanism and evidence of living up to our values;
- Adequate building regulations and their enforcement are important to protect people against natural disasters.

Calls for:

- A strong global response and full mobilisation of civil society, as people in Türkiye and Syria, grieve and try to survive without homes and proper sanitary conditions in extremely challenging environmental conditions. They deserve the international community's utmost support in these difficult times;
- Rapid, targeted additional support to help vulnerable refugees and their host communities deal with the new needs following the destruction;
- The EU to play an important role in supporting the UN reform agenda proposed by the UN Secretary General, which includes reform of the UN development system and restructuring of the peace and security pillar. Meanwhile, all countries in Europe to make a dedicated effort to come closer to the pledge of 0.7% of GNI for ODA, matching the generosity of the public;
- Make sure that the EU budget provides sufficient financial resources for the EU Civil protection mechanism, in order to efficiently save lives and mitigate the consequences in a growing number of disasters. Within the process of the MFF midterm review, the EU should consider increasing

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the funds for the EU civil protection mechanism, thus fulfilling the primary European commitment for solidarity as one of our fundamental values;

- The funds contributed from the International Donor's Conference, to be used not only for short-term emergency care relief, but also to rebuild crucial infrastructure, starting from medical and trauma centres, educational facilities, road infrastructure and residential buildings, sustainable employment, and by so doing to reduce internal displacements and the further impoverishment of the affected people;
- For stricter monitoring of the distribution process of international donors' funds to ensure it is fair and transparent, regardless of any political affiliations or ethnic background of the people receiving aid.
- For the involvement of community leaders from minority groups in the distribution process, to help ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are being met. The European Union to communicate in stronger terms the emergency support it provides;
- Building standards that are focused on ensuring the safety of the public, their implementation, and that best practice to be shared across Europe and the European Neighbourhood.

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