



Ministerial Session

Brussels IV Conference for Syria and the Region

Tuesday, 30 June 2020

A very good morning/afternoon/evening to all of you. As-salam alaykom. Sabah el Kheir/
Nour

Since the start of the Syrian crisis, over 13 million people have been displaced from their homes. We have witnessed immense human suffering and the impact of the conflict threatens to destabilize the wider region.

Syria and its neighbours are facing multiple challenges, including a rapidly evolving economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNH has been involved in the response to the Syrian crisis since the outset. We have first-and-foremost prioritized the resilience of subnational authorities and affected populations.

When I speak about resilience, I am not just referring to funding modalities; I am talking about its application at different stages of a crisis, whether it is absorptive, adaptive or transformative.

In Lebanon and Iraq, UNH has established a partnership with the EU Trust Fund, which focuses on enhancing the capacities of subnational authorities to engage in holistic, area-based planning, service delivery and local economic development.

These initiatives are mirrored by our programme in Syria, which focuses on the key challenges of conflict and displacement-affected communities. Since 2015 - 19, UNH has been supporting over 80 action plans in towns and cities across Syria; these are now being introduced into programming, as part of an area-based urban recovery agenda.

The protracted Syrian crisis has morphed into a new phase, and there is no clear end in sight. The region is facing almost insurmountable challenges, and we need to start to think differently about our approach.

We know that voluntary, safe and dignified return hinges on many factors, but we need to confront the reality that a more balanced emphasis on resilience funding is now also needed. There are ways to do this whilst ensuring certain essential safeguards remain in place. Finally, there is now a need to mobilise this funding through genuinely regional mechanisms.

In all cases, the surest contribution we can make is to invest in local capacities whilst pursuing social equity, participatory governance, local development, responsive service delivery, environmental sustainability, gender equality and, of course, durable solutions.