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Humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present review is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2642 \(2022\)](#), in which the Council requested that the Secretary-General provide a special report on the humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic by no later than 10 December 2022. Also in the resolution, the Council called upon humanitarian agencies to step up further initiatives to broaden the humanitarian activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, including water, sanitation, health, education, electricity where essential to restore access to basic services, and shelter early recovery projects. The report complements the inputs of the regular 60-day report of the Secretary-General on the Syrian Arab Republic, which the Council also requested in the resolution.

2. The information contained herein is based on available data from the United Nations system, compiled from humanitarian agencies, partners and other relevant sources. Information was gathered both in writing and through meetings held during visits to Damascus, Ankara, Gaziantep and Amman.

II. Overview of humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic

3. The Syrian Arab Republic faces a multitude of challenges, making it one of the most complex humanitarian and protection emergencies on the planet. After 11 years of conflict, the country still has the largest number of internally displaced persons in the world, driving one of the world's largest refugee crises, and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. Basic services are struggling, cholera has spread across the country amid the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, economic indicators continue to worsen, and climatic and human-caused shocks are compounding the already dire situation. As a result of these challenges, 15.3 million people among a total population of 22.1 million are anticipated to require humanitarian assistance in 2023, compared with 14.6 million people in 2022. This is the highest level of people in need since the start of the conflict.

Assessments of humanitarian need

4. Humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic benefit from disaggregated sector-specific data at the subdistrict level relating to humanitarian



needs. The data, collected by the United Nations and its partners, ensure enhanced accountability for affected populations by putting beneficiary needs and concerns at the centre of considerations. The humanitarian needs overview is based on a multisectoral needs assessment as well as sector-specific assessments. For the 2023 humanitarian programme cycle, the assessment was based on interviews with 34,065 households conducted in July and August 2022, 45 per cent of respondents to which were women, across all subdistricts in the country. The assessment is complemented by multiple sector-based assessments, including on protection; water, sanitation and hygiene; food; and nutrition.

Intersectoral needs based on the humanitarian needs overview for 2023

5. In 2022, the ability of people to meet their basic needs has further diminished. Overall, 85 per cent of households interviewed were either insufficiently able or completely unable to meet their basic needs, an increase from 76 per cent in the 2021 multisectoral needs assessment. The situation is significantly worse for female-headed households, with 9 out of 10 reporting insufficiently able or being completely unable to meet their basic household needs. Geographically, the worsening socioeconomic situation has had an impact throughout the country, in particular in Hasakah, Qunaytirah, Dar‘a, Tartus and Suwayda’ Governorates.

6. Households report that food, livelihood assistance and the provision of electricity are among their top three unmet needs. Some 59 per cent of households interviewed reported access to sufficient food as an unmet need, followed by the provision of electricity (47 per cent) and livelihood assistance (45 per cent). This is a change from the findings in the 2021 multisectoral needs assessment, in which the provision of electricity ranked third. A total of 71 per cent of female-headed households reported that food was an unmet need, a higher proportion than households headed by men at 58 per cent, followed by the need for non-food items (50 per cent), such as blankets, clothing, sanitation items, fuel, school supplies, and by livelihood opportunities (45 per cent). Overall, more than 3,000 households (9 per cent) reported unmet needs related to disability.

7. A growing income-expenditure gap has been recorded. By August 2022, the average household expenditure reported (855,499 Syrian pounds) exceeded the average reported household income (533,514 Syrian pounds) by 60 per cent, compared with 49 per cent in 2021. The gap has grown exponentially from 20 per cent in 2020 and 49 per cent in 2021. Geographically, people living in Qunaytirah, Rif Dimashq, Dar‘a and Suwayda’ reported the highest income deficit, with a gap of more than 100 per cent of the average income. Female-headed households and those where the head of household is living with disability are especially affected.

8. The rise in prices of food, fuel, goods and services across governorates made it more difficult to cover costs and further pushed families to use negative coping mechanisms, such as buying on credit or borrowing to meet basic needs. Most interviewed households reported increased prices and a lack of income as the main reasons that their ability to meet basic needs was limited, irrespective of the composition of the households and where they were located. Reliance on protracted debt is also increasing, locking families into cycles of repayment, limiting their ability to afford goods and services required to meet basic needs and reducing their financial ability to absorb new shocks. Compared with the 2020 and 2021 multisectoral needs assessments, households now report that they rely on their own savings to a lesser degree, suggesting that savings are being depleted. Some 36 per cent of households reported relying on humanitarian assistance, up from 21 per cent in 2021. Remittances play a major role in the capacity of households to cope with the economic situation. In addition, the economic crisis is affecting food consumption. Ninety per cent of households reported selecting less expensive or less preferable food at least once a

week, and almost half of all households reported that they were reducing the size of their meals at least once a week. About 19 per cent of female-headed households reported at least one household member going to sleep hungry owing to a lack of food. Forty per cent of pregnant and lactating women interviewed were consuming suboptimal diets.

9. Rates of malnutrition are increasing. According to the 2022 joint approach to nutrition and food security assessment, about 364,000 children under 5 years of age are suffering from acute malnutrition, and approximately 25 per cent of children under 5 are anaemic. Of concern, the number of severe acute malnutrition cases among infants and young children aged between 6 months and 5 years increased by 48 per cent compared with 2021. According to the Standardized Monitoring Assessment of Relief and Transitions nutrition survey conducted in 2022, 36 per cent of children under the age of 5 and 56 per cent of pregnant and lactating women were anaemic in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. Moreover, the survey shows that rates of severe acute malnutrition have doubled since 2021, while at least one in four children under the age of 5 in some districts of the country are stunted and are at risk of irreversible damage to their physical and cognitive development, repeated infection, developmental delay, disabilities and death. Stunting has long-term effects on individuals and societies, including low adult wages, lost productivity and, when accompanied by excessive weight gain later in childhood, an increased risk of nutrition-related chronic diseases in adult life. Millions of children in the country are now suffering from physical and cognitive impairments as a consequence of malnutrition.

10. Access to basic services remains severely limited. In the 2021 multisectoral needs assessment, unaffordable treatment and consultations were reported as the main barriers to gaining access to health services, but in 2022, the quality of services and the functionality of health facilities were mentioned more frequently. Overcrowding and/or long waiting times (35.5 per cent), followed by the ability to obtain the correct medication (23.5 per cent) and unaffordable treatment costs (22 per cent) were mentioned as the main issues in accessing health services.

11. According to the 2022 water, sanitation and hygiene assessment, water treatment and distribution networks continued to degrade, with 52 per cent of Syrians currently relying on often unsafe alternatives to piped water, up from 47 per cent in 2021. According to the water access mapping of June 2022 conducted under the humanitarian needs assessment programme, 24 per cent of populated communities reported that they rarely had sufficient access to their primary water source, which meant that an estimated 6.9 million people only had access to their primary water source for between 2 and 7 days per month. Faced with acute shortages in safe, public drinking water, households must increasingly rely on costly water supplied by private vendors that transport potentially unsafe water to neighbourhoods and communities. Also according to the 2022 water, sanitation and hygiene assessment, at least 70 per cent of sewage is discharged untreated, and at least half of the sewage systems are not functional. The lack of access to safe and sufficient water and hygiene is the main driver of the current cholera outbreak.

12. Different factors determine the vulnerability and the severity of needs of specific population groups. For internally displaced persons in camps, the main factors are their displacement status, limited livelihood opportunities in camps and the poor shelter and overcrowding conditions under which they live. For internally displaced persons living outside camps, the main factors are increased shelter assistance needs and the lack of access to non-food items, combined with limited access to basic services and infrastructure. For returnees, the main factors are the lack of access to non-food items and electricity and the increased need for shelter repairs, in addition to needs arising from particular security concerns. For other vulnerable

residents, needs are increasingly linked to the deterioration of the macroeconomic situation, combined with the continued lack of access to basic services and infrastructure as a result of years of conflict. Households headed by a member with a disability reported greater difficulties in meeting basic needs and were more likely to report barriers to accessing basic services. Some 55 per cent of households headed by a person over 60 years of age reported the need for health services, medicine and/or disability-specific services.

13. About 5.5 million Syrians are registered as refugees in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt; their needs are addressed through the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, a comprehensive, coordinated plan with five nationally led response plans.¹ Under the Plan, \$6.08 billion was requested in 2022, of which \$1.74 billion had been received as at 30 September.

Humanitarian sector-specific needs

14. **Protection.** Protection needs remain high across the Syrian Arab Republic. Civilians remain exposed to hostilities, especially along conflict lines, resulting in casualties and forced displacement. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, from 1 January to 30 September 2022, 450 civilians, including 49 women and 123 children, were killed as a result of hostilities and violence in the country. Grave violations committed against children in times of conflict, endemic gender-based violence and explosive ordnance contamination remain key features of the violence against civilians. Between January and September 2022, more than 1,895 reports of grave violations (affecting 247 girls, 1,598 boys, 36 sex unknown) were verified in the country by the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. Populations continue to suffer widespread gender-based violence in its different forms, including partner and family violence, sexual violence and harassment, early and forced marriage, incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse, and violence facilitated by technology, such as mobile phones or the Internet. The 2022 multisectoral needs assessment shows that female-headed households are more likely to express concerns around safety and security at home (18 per cent) and discrimination (20 per cent). Female-headed households are also more likely to report safety and security concerns related to displacement (9 per cent) and threats of exploitation and abuse, including of a sexual nature (7 per cent). In Hawl camp in Hasakah Governorate, some 54,000 people, 94 per cent of them women and children, faced a continued deterioration in their security situation in 2022, with multiple safety and security incidents recorded, including against humanitarian workers, contributing to the challenges faced by humanitarian partners in accessing vulnerable groups. In 2022, 42 murders have been reported, including of 22 women and 4 children.

15. Signs of psychological distress in boys and girls under the age of 18 are reported by more than 27 per cent of households and are the highest for households headed by women or people living with a disability. Households in conflict zones express concerns related to the presence of unexploded ordnance, improvised explosive devices and landmines, and higher safety and security concerns related to conflict. Civil documentation issues remain prominent, especially in the north-east and north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, where only 13 per cent of households report having all of the official documentation that they need. As of 2022, almost 20 per cent of internally displaced person households report having been displaced at least five times, overstressing coping mechanisms and reducing resilience.

¹ The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan is implemented jointly by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

16. **Food security and agriculture.** An estimated 15 million people will need food security and agricultural assistance in 2023. The figure comprises 12.1 million people facing acute food insecurity and 2.8 million people at risk of sliding into food insecurity, compared with parallel estimates of 12 million people and 1.9 million people, respectively, for 2022. The figure for the acute food-insecure includes 2 million people living in camps and deemed to be completely food-insecure. The food security crisis in the country is protracted and remains characterized by very complex drivers and contributing factors, including ongoing violence and security risks, the economic crisis and weakened local currency, drought-like conditions and severe agroclimatic fluctuations, water scarcity, limited energy supply and population movements. The needs require the sector and partners to go beyond short-term responses in order to focus additionally on scaling up early recovery and the protection and promotion of livelihoods in the short- to medium-term. According to WFP, in 2022, households, in particular those headed by women, reported food shortages and the need to resort to negative coping mechanisms to maximize the use of available resources. For example, 58 per cent of households borrowed money to buy food, and 52 per cent had to restrict food consumption for adults in favour of children.

17. **Early recovery and livelihoods.** Some 15.3 million people will need early recovery and livelihood support in 2023. Assessments across the country show a general deterioration in access to livelihoods, the ability to meet basic needs and access to basic services, such as water systems, health facilities, schools and bakeries. The situation threatens the resilience and social cohesion of households. Inflationary trends for key goods and services, the widespread low productivity of inputs, low wages and lack of employment, among other factors, continue to affect the main needs of households and exacerbate the income-expenditure gap across the country. The multisectoral needs assessment data for 2022 on labour force participation at the household level show a marked difference in the different areas of control across the Syrian Arab Republic. In government-controlled areas, 49 per cent of households have more than one member in employment. The percentage falls to 33 per cent in the north-east of the country and to 21 per cent in the north-west, with the differences due to higher rates of women's participation in the workforce in government-controlled areas. In the 2022 multisectoral needs assessment, 22 per cent of households indicated that technical and vocational training would improve their access to the labour market.

18. **Water, sanitation and hygiene.** Over 13.5 million people will need water, sanitation and hygiene assistance in 2023, an increase of 2.6 per cent from 2022. Access to water, sanitation and hygiene services is compromised by the prolonged decay of the existing systems, caused by damage incurred over years of conflict, wear from long-term functioning at high capacity, little or no maintenance, the continuous drain of technical staff and poor natural resource management. Almost half a million more people will be in acute need of water, sanitation and hygiene assistance in 2023, and an additional 10 per cent of subdistricts are now in severe need compared with 2021, a further deterioration for an already vulnerable population. Economic conditions remain a challenge for vulnerable communities and households seeking to access safe, affordable and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and hygiene items. Moreover, people in need face critically bad sanitation conditions. Poor hygiene practices, the deterioration of water quality and the lack of proper water, sanitation and hygiene conditions have a direct impact in terms of increasing public health risks and malnutrition, as well as an impact on the livelihoods and security of households. Women and girls, persons with disabilities, the elderly, widows, single mothers, female-headed households and people living in areas that are hard to access face more constraints and protection risks in accessing water, sanitation and hygiene services.

19. **Health.** More than 15.3 million people will be in dire need of life-saving health assistance in 2023, an increase of 3.2 million from 2022 due primarily to recurring disease outbreaks, ongoing violence and the economic crisis. This includes 5.3 million internally displaced persons, 2.2 million children under the age of 5, 4.2 million women of reproductive age (between the ages of 15 and 49) and more than 700,000 elderly people. The fact that the health systems are debilitated, fragile and disrupted and face concurrent public health emergencies and numerous challenges affects not only the access to and the availability and quality of health services across the Syrian Arab Republic but also the physical and mental well-being of the vulnerable among the population. In addition to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the recurring leishmaniasis outbreaks, the Ministry of Health declared a cholera outbreak in September 2022. Between 25 August and early December, more than 50,000 suspected cholera cases were reported throughout the country, including 98 attributed deaths to date, with a case fatality rate of 0.2 per cent. The complex humanitarian emergency facing people in the country continues to pose challenges for the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services – including life-saving emergency obstetric care and contraception – as the health system is severely overstretched. In the north-west, between 1 January and 31 October 2022, an alarming rise in suicide-related concerns was recorded through mental health service mapping by the World Health Organization (WHO), with 42 young women ending their lives, 293 cases of confirmed suicide attempts, and 547 cases of suicidal ideation. In the north-east, one in four households reported access to health services as an unmet need, compared with the national average of 14 per cent.

20. **Nutrition.** Approximately 5.9 million people, comprising 3.8 million children and 2.1 million women, will be in dire need of nutrition assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2023, an increase from 5.5 million people in 2022. The country is faced with a triple burden of malnutrition: high levels of chronic malnutrition, as evidenced by widespread stunting; increasing levels of acute malnutrition; and emergency levels of anaemia among children and women of reproductive age. Aggravating factors leading to increased malnutrition include food insecurity, scarce and unsafe sources of water, the spread of disease and a decrease in or loss of household income. Across all populations, children under the age of 5, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women have relatively high nutritional needs and are the most vulnerable groups that require the support of the nutrition sector.

21. **Shelter and non-food items.** An estimated 5.7 million people in the Syrian Arab Republic will require shelter support in 2023. According to the 2022 multisectoral needs assessment, 34 per cent of the overall population lives in substandard shelter, such as unfinished, damaged or makeshift shelters, prefabricated units and tents. A lack of access to electricity and lighting, insulation from heat and cold, and the deterioration of shelter integrity (such as notable increases in damage to windows and doors), in addition to a lack of privacy, are among the top shelter issues identified. The deterioration in economic conditions, compounded by a depreciating Syrian pound, has further intensified the need for non-food items such as essential household goods. The overall estimate of the number of people who will be in need of non-food items in 2023 has increased to 5.7 million, up from 4.9 million for 2022. Winter clothing, mattresses and blankets have become increasingly inaccessible in 2022 compared with 2021. Expenditure on clothing is three times higher than expenditure on rent or electricity.

22. **Education.** Some 6.9 million children and educational personnel in the Syrian Arab Republic will need emergency education services in 2023. According to the 2022 multisectoral needs assessment, an estimated 88 per cent of children report attending school at the national level. While attendance rates are similar for boys and girls up to 11 years of age, a gender disparity in school attendance is observed after

that age, with fewer boys than girls attending school, along with a sharp decrease in overall attendance, with only 12 per cent reported to be attending secondary school. Forty-eight per cent of families with children between 6 and 17 years of age reported that one reason for their children not attending school was the need for the child to work in order to support the household. The figure was particularly high among returnees and internally displaced persons living outside camps, at 58 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively, and was highest for families residing in Homs (67 per cent), Hasakah (65 per cent), Suwayda' (64 per cent) and Raqqah (61 per cent). According to a protection sector assessment, most child labour cases involve adolescent boys between 14 and 17 years of age. Early marriage is another reason that children drop out of school. According to the assessment, 84 per cent of children live in locations where child marriage is identified as an issue for girls between 15 and 17 years of age. Furthermore, only 11 per cent of four-year-olds and 36 per cent of five-year-olds attend any type of learning, limiting their readiness for school. The data from the 2022 multisectoral needs assessment indicate that children displaced more than three times are 20 per cent more likely not to attend school at all and 42 per cent more likely not to attend during the first three years of displacement.

23. **Camp coordination and management.** Over 1.8 million internally displaced persons living in 1,421 last-resort sites in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic will need assistance in 2023, an increase from 1.7 million in 2022. An additional 278,400 internally displaced persons residing in more than 260 sites in the north-east need assistance. Chronic underfunding and access constraints have led to severe gaps in camp management. In the north-west, 76 per cent of internally displaced person sites do not have a camp management system in place, and in the north-east, only 5 per cent of sites have a constant camp management presence. In the north-west, 87 per cent of internally displaced person sites are self-settled sites, while in the north-east, 48 per cent of internally displaced persons live in informal settlements or collective centres. Overall, 79 per cent of internally displaced person sites are critically overcrowded in the north-west, with 6 out of 10 camps overcrowded in the north-east.

Lack of electricity and humanitarian needs

24. Electricity shortages in the Syrian Arab Republic continue to affect access to basic services, such as education, health, and water, sanitation and hygiene services. For example, electricity shortages affect the functioning of emergency and intensive care units in hospitals, potable water supply systems, waste-water treatment plants and bakeries. According to UNDP, damage to electricity infrastructure reduced the country's electricity generation capacity from 5,800 MW in 2010 (with a potential full capacity of 9,000 MW) to 2,000 MW in 2021.

25. Access to electricity at the household level is a further challenge. Some 73 per cent of interviewees in the 2022 multisectoral needs assessment reported receiving less than eight hours of electricity per day, while 58 per cent received three to eight hours of electricity per day. Government-controlled areas reported the highest levels of need (55 per cent), followed by the north-east (35 per cent) and north-west of the country (25 per cent). In the north-west, 60 per cent of households reported having access to renewable energy, with 4 per cent reporting access in the north-east and 8 per cent in government-controlled areas. The situation increases the reliance of households on humanitarian assistance and negative coping mechanisms. The data from the 2022 multisectoral needs assessment that relate to access to electricity and the ability to meet basic needs indicate that households reporting access to more hours of electricity per day report that they are better able to meet basic needs. Conversely, households reporting access to fewer hours of electricity per day report lower abilities to meet their needs. A lack of electricity also hinders early recovery efforts, as it limits

the production capacity of local businesses and the potential for income-generating activities and market-based interventions, among other impacts.

Winter needs

26. Across the Syrian Arab Republic, the 2022–2023 winter season is anticipated to be particularly harsh because of the severe fuel and electricity shortages and the worsening socioeconomic situation. Temperatures routinely fall below zero degrees Celsius in the mountainous parts of the country, while the plains are prone to flooding. Approximately 6 million people are estimated to need humanitarian assistance to cope with harsh conditions during this winter season, an alarming 33 per cent increase compared with the previous season.

27. At least 2.2 million of those people prioritized for winter assistance are in government-controlled areas. Communities residing in high-altitude locations, such as the Bludan, Qalamun and Zabadani areas in Rif Dimashq and Haffah and Jafra near Ladhqiqiyah, are especially susceptible to the effects of harsh winters. In these areas, winterization assistance has been integrated into the 2022 humanitarian response plan, which is less than 50 per cent funded. The low level of funding affects the ability to meet winter needs across the shelter, education, health, nutrition, protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene sectors.

28. People in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic are particularly vulnerable to winter weather, with over 2.87 million people displaced and about 1.8 million people living in approximately 1,400 internally displaced person sites. The sites often lack adequate shelter, infrastructure and basic services. Overall, some 4.1 million people in the north-west need humanitarian assistance, 80 per cent of whom are women and children. The United Nations cross-border operation reaches 2.7 million people with life-saving aid each month. The 2022–2023 winterization and flooding preparedness and response plan of the United Nations and humanitarian partners for the north-west of the country is aimed at assisting 2.5 million people in need by providing heating fuel, stoves, plastic sheets, thermal blankets and winter clothes. To address the impact of flooding, partners focus on levelling ground, strengthening basic infrastructure and ensuring emergency response capacity and market access. In the plan, it is noted that \$209.5 million is needed, only 18 per cent of which had been funded as of early November 2022.

III. Update on cross-line deliveries of humanitarian assistance

29. There are 7.5 million people living in the areas not under government control in the Syrian Arab Republic, of whom 6.8 million are in need of humanitarian assistance. They are concentrated primarily across northern parts of the country, with a smaller population located in Rukban in the south-east. Humanitarian needs in those areas are significant as a result of the prolonged periods of hostilities and the high proportion of internally displaced persons, many living in camps, informal settlements or collective centres.

Cross-line access in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic

30. The United Nations continues to do everything in its power to scale up cross-line assistance to people in need in the north-west, including by finalizing a revised plan to incrementally increase cross-line access. Given the severity and scale of needs, this assistance complements the cross-border response by targeting those who do not receive assistance through that response.

31. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution [2585 \(2021\)](#), in July 2021, the United Nations agencies have successfully completed nine cross-line missions to Sarmada, in the north-west of the country, pre-positioning 134 truckloads of supplies from the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WHO, with each mission carrying supplies sufficient for between 43,000 and 54,000 people. A new direct distribution model agreeable to all parties was set up in November 2021 to distribute the aid delivered cross-line, as parties could not agree on the use of existing delivery mechanisms.

32. The most recent mission, which took place on 30 November 2022, was the fourth of monthly convoys conducted in August, September, October and November since the adoption of Security Council resolution [2642 \(2022\)](#). Through the four convoys, 2,090 metric tons of food assistance, nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation items, health and dignity kits, medicine and other supplies were delivered for people in need in the north-west of the country.

Cross-line access in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic

33. Between 1 January and 31 October, the United Nations dispatched a total of 867 trucks carrying nearly 23,000 tons of humanitarian assistance to Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah and Qamishli in the north-east of the country. Notwithstanding some access and operational challenges, the delivery of assistance remained relatively consistent.

34. WHO continued to provide critical health services, referrals and life-saving supplies to more than 3 million people living in the north-east, including 1.78 million estimated to be residing in non-government-controlled cross-line areas. In 2022, nine road convoys of 19 trucks and nine airlifts were delivered to Qamishli and further distributed across the north-east. The provisions consisted of 219 tons of medicines and medical supplies sufficient for 1,401,880 treatment courses and 1,200 trauma cases, as well as COVID-19 vaccines and vaccines for routine immunization campaigns, essential medicines, lab supplies, medical equipment, trauma and emergency surgery kits, oral rehydration salts, materials for water chlorination, cholera kits and other medical supplies. They reached partners in Hasakah, Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates, including non-governmental facilities outside government-controlled areas.

35. Between January and October 2022, UNICEF delivered \$4.2 million worth of supplies in 221 trucks to the north-east of the country. So far in 2022, UNHCR has delivered 303,505 non-food items, such as blankets and plastic sheeting, to 1.5 million people in camp and urban settings in the north-east.

36. On 27 October, a joint WHO and UNICEF humanitarian convoy delivered cholera and leishmaniasis medicine cross-line to the Ra's al-Ayn-Tall Abyad area, in the north-east of the country. This was the first United Nations cross-line aid delivery conducted to the area since 2019. More than four tons of health supplies sufficient for 14,000 treatment courses were delivered.

Cross-line access to Rukban

37. The most recent United Nations humanitarian convoy to reach Rukban from within the Syrian Arab Republic was conducted in September 2019. Access by commercial trucks, using informal routes, has been sporadic. Since the decision of the Government of Jordan in March 2020 to close the border as a preventive measure to contain the spread of COVID-19, people from Rukban who require medical care have been unable to gain access to the United Nations clinic on the Jordanian side of the border. Critical health cases continued to be referred to Damascus, in coordination

with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Residents of the Rukban area continue to live in dire conditions, with limited livelihood opportunities and access to food, water, health care and other basic services. The United Nations continues to advocate full access in order to be able to provide regular humanitarian assistance, including seeking assurances of the necessary security guarantees for humanitarian staff. The United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent jointly developed an operational plan for a cross-line mission to Rukban aimed at providing humanitarian assistance, including immunizations, carrying out needs assessments and supporting voluntary departures.

Challenges to cross-line access

38. Notwithstanding the progress made, challenges still need to be overcome to achieve regular and sustained cross-line operations in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, as envisaged under the revised United Nations plan for inter-agency cross-line convoys. Receiving the adequate clearance to expand these operations by allowing multiple cross-line convoys each month to increase the number of people reached by cross-line aid remains necessary. Timely security guarantees from parties to the conflict to ensure the safe passage of cross-line convoys and their personnel need to be provided to further scale up the cross-line response, while additional funding is urgently needed to ensure that supplies can be procured for all targeted people in need. The commitment by all parties to non-interference in humanitarian activities at all stages of cross-line delivery is essential. Ensuring accountability for affected people is another important aspect that needs to be considered, including by securing community acceptance of the deliveries and engaging with neighbouring communities or other groups to minimize the possibility of negative responses after the aid is delivered. In the north-east of the country, adequate clearance in a timely manner and for the appropriate period of time is needed. Timely security guarantees for the passage of cross-line convoys and their personnel and a conducive security environment are also necessary.

IV. Progress on early recovery

39. Early recovery and livelihood activities represent one of three core pillars of the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic. Early recovery activities are aimed at preventing a further increase in the number of people in need, reducing humanitarian needs by strengthening self-reliance, improving individual and community welfare and reducing dependence on external assistance. The United Nations and its partners support early recovery and livelihood projects across five distinct domains: (a) the repair and rehabilitation of critical civilian infrastructure; (b) the removal of debris and solid waste; (c) income-generating activities and market-based interventions; (d) vocational and skills training; and (e) social cohesion and community interventions.

40. From January until the end of October 2022, at least 374 projects, the objectives of which were to support early recovery efforts in part or in full, had received \$517.6 million and were being implemented in all 14 governorates. These include projects across various sectors, including the early recovery and livelihood sector. At least 158 of the projects contributed in some way to the provision of electricity to support basic services or household-level electricity provision. Between 1 January and 30 September, humanitarian partners estimated that over 2.8 million Syrians had been reached directly, and a further 8 million indirectly, through projects aimed at increasing resilience in 2022.

41. According to key achievements reported for the early recovery and livelihood sector alone, 665,024 direct beneficiaries were reached between 1 January and

30 September, while 4.4 million people benefited indirectly. Some 25,150 jobs were created in 14 governorates, 202 km of roads were repaired, 898 classrooms were rehabilitated, 171,483 tons of solid waste were removed, 22,456 people obtained business support, 133 solar systems were distributed and installed, 1,472 m³ of debris were removed and 138,270 people benefited from vocational training.

42. In areas supported by the humanitarian country team, operating from Damascus, through projects in the early recovery and livelihoods sector between 1 January and 30 September, 12,236 jobs were created, 192 classrooms were built, 170,364 tons of solid waste were removed, 15,201 people received business support, 133 solar systems were distributed and installed, 1,080 m³ of debris were removed, 123,387 people benefited from vocational training and 22,119 vulnerable households received assistance. During the same period in the north-west of the country, 9,694 jobs were created, 200 km of roads were repaired, 624 classrooms were rehabilitated, 1,119 tons of solid waste were removed, 5,315 people received business support, 392 m³ of debris were removed and 11,883 people benefited from vocational training. During the same period in the north-east, 3,220 jobs were created, 82 classrooms were rehabilitated, 1,940 people received business support 3,000 people benefited from vocational training and 1,288 vulnerable households were provided with assistance.

43. During their deployment from December 2021 to the end of October 2022, the clearance teams funded by the Mine Action Service cleared about 1.1 million m² of agricultural land and destroyed 444 pieces of explosive ordnance in Darayya, Rif Dimashq. The cleared land is now safe to access and use for much-needed agricultural production, contributing to better livelihoods for vulnerable communities in the region.

44. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued the work that it had started in 2021 to rehabilitate damaged parts of three major irrigation systems, including the replacement and maintenance of pumping equipment and the repair of distribution canals. Those efforts resulted in the restoration of irrigated water supplies to almost 10,000 ha belonging to about 5,500 smallholder households. FAO also supported 2,200 vulnerable farmers in increasing their crop production in Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqah Governorates. Some 8,800 herders in Dayr al-Zawr benefited from an artificial insemination campaign for cattle. To empower women in rural communities, FAO established 32 units for processing seasonal produce across seven governorates, training 800 rural women to run them. Under the water-for-agricultural-production programme in several governorates, 816 farmers and 30 technicians were trained in water management by water users' associations.

45. In 2022, WFP has completed 11 early recovery projects in Aleppo, Homs, Dayr al-Zawr, Dar'a and Rif Dimashq Governorates. The projects benefited over 335,000 people by restoring their access to irrigation water, improving their agricultural production and increasing their access to bread. In addition, WFP rehabilitated seven bakeries in Dayr al-Zawr, Aleppo and Dar'a Governorates, which provide bread daily to some 245,000 people. WFP also rehabilitated the Hulah irrigation canals and the Ayn al-Qusayr irrigation system in Homs, as well as the east Maskanah irrigation system in Aleppo. The systems provide irrigation water to 81,500 farmers daily, enabling them to resume the production of crops, in particular wheat. WFP further rehabilitated a water well in Qalamun, Rif Dimashq, providing about 8,500 farmers with daily water for irrigation. In addition to those projects, productive agricultural inputs and tools enabled 30,000 farmers to restore their livelihoods and improve the quality of agricultural production.

46. In the north-west, UNDP supported almost 100 women farmers through training in climate-smart agricultural practices and in-kind support, including seeds and fertilizers, to improve productivity in Salqin subdistrict. In addition, UNDP

rehabilitated 7.5 km of irrigation channels and 15 wells, installed 18 solar systems and created a rainwater harvesting scheme. A UNDP partner working in the north-east of the country has reached over 18,000 direct beneficiaries through an area-based approach targeting a subdistrict of Raqqah Governorate. Work in the community to date has included the rehabilitation of a hospital benefiting 12,012 individuals, the rehabilitation of community and basic services infrastructure and the creation of 1,500 short- and long-term work opportunities.

47. Between January and October 2022, UNHCR and partners completed minor repairs to 830 damaged houses and distributed 6,800 shelter kits consisting of materials for installing doors and windows. UNHCR supported the removal of 62,000 m³ of debris and the repair of 5 km of water and sewage networks to improve the access of vulnerable families to basic services. In 2022, UNHCR continued to provide livelihood support to vulnerable internally displaced persons and returnees in order to enhance their resilience and minimize their exposure to harmful coping mechanisms and protection risks that have been exacerbated by the economic crisis in the country. This resulted in more than 10,000 internally displaced and returnee family beneficiaries in 2022.

48. UNICEF supported the rehabilitation and operation of 15 water stations in Idlib and Aleppo Governorates in the north-west, serving some 206,000 people. It also supported the rehabilitation of sewage and sanitation networks to cover the needs of 149,000 people living in the same governorates. Between January and October 2022, the Fund provided 3.4 million people with access to safe water and sanitation through the rehabilitation of sewage networks and water wells. In the same period, it rehabilitated 407 classrooms, benefiting 12,600 people in Aleppo, Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Homs, Raqqah, and Idlib. Between January and September 2022, UNICEF provided 10,500 girls and boys with disabilities in Hasakah, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Rif Dimashq Governorates with regular cash transfers of \$40 per month and case management services.

49. UNFPA has conducted interventions to build the resilience of local communities and ensure access to essential services for 42,352 beneficiaries in eastern rural Aleppo. The package of interventions includes the provision of sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services, a community midwifery group, cash and voucher assistance and the rehabilitation of the health infrastructure.

50. Between January and September 2022, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) supported community projects, including some aimed at constructing markets, installing lighting for roads, rehabilitating the sewage system of health facilities and providing medical equipment, which benefited 20,500 people in the north-west of the country, while cash-for-work, vocational training and business development activities benefited another 2,800 people. Between January and October 2022, IOM carried out early recovery and livelihood activities in the north-west that were focused on rain drainage, road gravelling, tent ground insulation and the construction of culverts, covering more than 25 sites and targeting more than 145,000 internally displaced person beneficiaries in the region.

51. WHO is supporting the rehabilitation of and equipping primary and secondary health-care facilities in an effort to restore essential health services. In Nawa in Dar'a, Mayadin in Dayr al-Zawr and Razi in Aleppo, there are four ongoing projects to rehabilitate three hospitals in areas heavily affected by the conflict. In addition, eight primary health centres, servicing a total estimated catchment of 40,000 people, were fully equipped in Homs, Dar'a and Qunaytirah, to support locations where displaced persons are expected to return. Non-governmental organization partners of WHO have reached an estimated 870,000 individuals through 11 supported primary health centres and 17 mobile units. In the north-west of the country, WHO upgraded more

than 10 emergency internal medicines hospitals with a total additional capacity of 700 beds, including 300 intensive care units.

V. Transparency in humanitarian operations

Damascus-based operations

52. To ensure that assistance reaches people in need in a transparent and principled manner, humanitarian actors operating inside the Syrian Arab Republic have reinforced standards of due diligence and monitoring procedures. The approach begins with a global framework of mandatory indicators, tools and guidance documents, as well as tailored monitoring and evaluation strategies outlining specific commitments and methods for the Syrian context. The implementation of projects is monitored directly and by third-party monitors, which complement the regular United Nations visits by conducting regular on-site visits to oversee project implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

53. A high degree of due diligence in humanitarian programming in the country is contractually ensured through strict agreements between donors and partners and between partnering organizations. Projects are regularly audited by independent auditors to ensure independence and prevent corruption. Feedback mechanisms help agencies to better understand whether deliveries are meeting household needs. United Nations agencies also conduct evaluations to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of programmes.

54. The United Nations in the Syrian Arab Republic follows strict due diligence standards when awarding procurement contracts, as guided by the United Nations procurement principles of transparency, fairness and competition. United Nations entities are required to screen suppliers against the United Nations Security Council Consolidated List, the listing of ineligible firms and individuals of the World Bank, and the United Nations ineligibility list, which is the aggregated list of entities under sanctions of the Security Council and vendors suspended for proven unethical practices and poor performance.

55. The United Nations country team in the Syrian Arab Republic has developed a risk management system to manage the complicated operating environment. A Risk Management Unit, established in the Resident Coordinator Office, provides analysis and coordination support to ensure that the United Nations, its partners and donors can deliver the most impact in a principled and transparent manner. In March 2022, the United Nations country team also established a timebound task force on human rights due diligence to assess current due diligence practices and identify further improvements.

Cross-border operation

56. In three reports on humanitarian cross-line and cross-border operations ([S/2018/617](#), [S/2020/401](#) and [S/2021/1030](#)), the Secretary-General described the steps taken by the United Nations cross-border operation to monitor the delivery of aid across the border from Türkiye until it reaches people in need in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. The reports detail the monitoring at four distinct levels: (a) at the border by the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic; (b) at warehouses inside the Syrian Arab Republic; (c) at distribution points; and (d) after distribution to beneficiaries. The cross-border operation has been, and remains, a transparent operation that enables the United Nations to monitor the status of aid deliveries at every step in the process, despite being a remotely managed operation.

57. Since 2014, the humanitarian nature of the cross-border assistance has been verified consistently by the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism at the trans-shipment hub near the Bab al-Hawa crossing point, as well as at other crossing points that had previously been authorized for use by the Security Council. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism continues to work closely with customs officials of the Government of Türkiye to enhance transparency and ensure that humanitarian goods are not interfered with or manipulated. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Government of Türkiye. From the introduction of the closely monitored system in July 2014 until October 2022, 53,811 trucks with humanitarian aid crossed into the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. No non-humanitarian items have been found in the consignments.

58. Deliveries of aid are confirmed upon arrival at warehouses by trusted and vetted implementing partners and by third-party monitors contracted by the United Nations. As in aid operations managed from within the Syrian Arab Republic, third-party monitors observe the distribution of supplies to beneficiaries or to facilities such as schools and health centres. At distribution points, videos and time-stamped, geotagged photos are used to confirm delivery. Modalities for post-distribution monitoring include focus group discussions, complaint and feedback mechanisms at supported facilities, and beneficiary satisfaction surveys. In addition, the cross-border operation is subject to accountability mechanisms between donors and partners.

59. While individual agencies manage risks on an ongoing basis, a Risk Management Unit in the office of the Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator consolidates efforts to jointly assess and respond to risks in the cross-border operation and supports the risk management working group of the Humanitarian Liaison Group.

VI. Observations

60. Humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic continue to increase. Ongoing conflict along front lines, deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, limited access to basic services, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the cholera outbreak across the country have left more people struggling to meet their basic needs and eroded their capacities to cope with shocks. This has led to yet another projected increase in the number of people needing humanitarian aid, from 14.6 million in 2022 to a staggering 15.3 million in 2023, the highest level since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011. Winter weather is expected to worsen the situation for millions of already vulnerable people across the country in the coming months.

61. Continued attacks harming civilians point to a general lack of compliance by all parties with international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution. I reiterate my call upon all parties to take constant care to spare civilians and civilian objects throughout their military operations, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

62. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by the crisis, including by gender-based violence, forced and early marriage and restricted access to livelihood opportunities. Increased support to and cooperation among Syrian women-led civil society organizations across the country are critical to increase the impact of interventions and to transfer knowledge and expertise.

63. Among the most vulnerable residents are those in the north-west of the country, who rely on humanitarian assistance delivered through the United Nations cross-border mechanism and where humanitarian conditions continue to decline owing to ongoing hostilities and a deepening economic crisis. Today in the region, 4.1 million

people, 80 per cent of them women and children, in a population of 4.6 million, are estimated to need humanitarian assistance to meet their most basic needs.

64. I remain concerned at the low overall level of funding of the humanitarian response plan for the Syrian Arab Republic, and I call for greater solidarity and increased humanitarian funding, including for early recovery and livelihood programmes.

65. In March 2020, I called for the waiving of sanctions that might impede access to essential health supplies, COVID-19-related medical support or food in the Syrian Arab Republic. I encourage relevant Member States and humanitarian actors to continue their technical dialogue regarding sanctions and humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic. I hope that the relevant parties can find ways to address the challenges that several humanitarian actors in the country face in ensuring adequate and reliable access to financial services.

66. The unintended impact of sanctions on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and access to essential services (health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and agriculture) affects two main areas. First, with regard to procurement, humanitarian organizations are experiencing a decrease in the number of bidders, increases in prices and delays in the delivery of goods due to higher compliance and operational costs. Second, with regard to payments, the compliance departments of banks have been refusing or delaying financial transactions until compliance assessments have been completed. The United Nations will continue to engage bilaterally with relevant actors on these issues to identify measures for overcoming operational hurdles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in response to the growing needs.

67. The United Nations continues to support humanitarian assistance and early recovery initiatives and humanitarian access through all modalities, in line with Security Council resolution [2642 \(2022\)](#). The informal interactive dialogue has presented an opportunity for Member States to discuss their critical role in ensuring the full implementation of that resolution.

68. Despite facing a complex set of challenges, the United Nations and its partners continue to have broad visibility of all humanitarian operations. A thorough understanding of humanitarian needs underpins deliveries of humanitarian assistance, while oversight is maintained concerning what is being delivered and where the assistance is going. The risk management systems in place further facilitate the transparency of operations by providing a clear assessment of challenges, mitigating factors and residual risk. Overall, a robust and rigorous system is in place.

69. I remain convinced that the further expansion of early recovery activities is critical to the continued success of the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic and to the future of the Syrian people. Needs continue to grow, outpacing our ability to respond with limited resources. The response must become increasingly sustainable; otherwise, as we are witnessing, more people will be unable to meet their basic needs. While life-saving activities are a central part of the humanitarian response, strengthening resilience through early recovery is key to addressing the rising needs. Increasing support for electricity, where essential to restore access to basic services, is an important component of this work. This year, donors have generously contributed \$517.6 million to partially or fully support early recovery efforts in all 14 governorates. It will be critical for donors to continue to engage and work with humanitarian partners. This includes further increasing and broadening the financial support for early recovery work throughout the country and providing unearmarked funds whenever possible.

70. The present report lays out the progress that has been made on cross-line operations throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations revised its plan to incrementally increase cross-line access and continues to do everything in its power to scale up cross-line assistance to people in need in order to complement the cross-border response. Receiving the necessary and timely security guarantees from parties to the conflict remains critical for ensuring the safe passage of cross-line convoys and their personnel.

71. In its resolution [2642 \(2022\)](#), the Security Council extended the authorization for the critical cross-border operation that provides life-saving support for 2.7 million people in need each month, approximately 65 per cent of people in need in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. Cross-border assistance remains an indispensable part of the operation of the United Nations and its partners aimed at reaching all people in need. While an important complement, the cross-line operations currently remain unable to replace the size or scope of the massive United Nations cross-border operation.

72. Without United Nations cross-border access to the north-west of the country, hunger will increase, millions will be at risk of losing shelter assistance, and access to water will decrease. The delivery of essential medical supplies and provision of quality health services – such as reproductive, maternal and newborn care, immunization services to children and the prevention and control of the spread of communicable diseases such as cholera, the most recent outbreak – would be greatly affected. Our ability to provide the minimum protection to women and girls will become severely limited. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism will also cease its operations, decreasing transparency and accountability. A halt to cross-border deliveries in the middle of winter would risk leaving millions of Syrians without the aid needed to endure harsh weather conditions. The renewal by the Security Council of the cross-border mechanism, which remains a lifeline for millions of people, is critical. It is a moral and humanitarian imperative.
