INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE VICTIMS OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

24 May 2017

THE MADRID PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The Madrid priorities, presented during the May 24th, 2017 Conference on the Victims of Ethnic and Religious Violence in the Middle East, are intended to address the most urgent actions needed at this moment to address the dramatic situation of persons belonging to communities targeted for ethnic or religious reasons by Daesh and other terrorist organizations and threatened as such. Beyond the solidarity that must benefit all victims of conflict and violence, there is a pressing necessity to protect and preserve those communities and cultures whose very existence is threatened in Iraq and Syria.

Faced with this challenge, the Madrid priorities will serve as a roadmap for the international community’s immediate response. The aim is to identify -within these priorities- programs, projects and actions to enable displaced populations to return and to foster reconciliation and stabilization. Participants are encouraged to draw on it to carry out concrete measures, ahead of the follow-up conference, announced for 2018 by the Belgian government.

PRIORITY AREAS

Many actions and programs have been implemented by States and international organizations since the presentation of the Paris Action Plan on 8th September 2015. Given the situation on the ground, humanitarian assistance to the displaced populations has been an important priority in its implementation.

In view of changes in the military and political situation, with more areas liberated from Daesh and other terrorist organizations, the international community can support programs in order to enable the members of minorities who so wish to return to and resettle their regions of origin.

In this context, a number of priorities and projects have been identified on which work can be done in the short and medium term.

1. HELPING ENDANGERED POPULATIONS AND FACILITATING THEIR RETURN

Helping endangered populations has a twofold objective:
- Meeting the pressing needs of displaced persons to ensure decent living conditions for them, and continuing humanitarian aid efforts, to support countries in the region most affected by the influx of refugees - Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq - and for host communities in those countries.

- As material and safety conditions gradually permit, assisting different populations in returning voluntarily to their places of origin and guaranteeing their safety, protection and access to basic social services.

**PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION**

**Prioritize a comprehensive approach** that combines humanitarian aid, stabilization and development. Several major areas for the implementation of projects have been identified, especially in the governorate of Nineveh. Participants are encouraged to support actions in these areas, in coordination with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

**IMPROVING SECURITY**: Support the Iraqi government, local authorities and Iraqi security forces as they secure the areas won back from DAESH, in order to facilitate the voluntary return of all displaced populations to their homes, under sufficient security conditions. The security of routes and the protection of towns and villages have been identified as one of the most urgent priorities in order for the displaced populations to voluntarily return:

- Support training and equipment to local police and security units.
- Encourage an inclusive representation in the security forces from all components of society.

**DEMINING**:

- Clear land and property of mines and Improvised Explosive Devices.

**STABILIZATION**: Strengthen support to the Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization. The priority is to support rapid reconstruction efforts:

- Homes. The reconstruction and repair of homes has been identified as a priority for action. In the Nineveh plains, 65% of homes are partially damaged, 32% burned and 3% totally damaged.
- Power and water supplies.
- Re-establishment of healthcare and education systems.

**ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**:

- Microfinance and Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) initiatives. Support micro-enterprise projects in Nineveh and Sinjar, particularly those supporting female heads of households.
- Agricultural livelihood projects.
- Vocational training programs.

**SPECIAL PROJECTS**:

- Special support to women and children affected by conflict. Special projects to assist vulnerable communities.
- Participation of vulnerable communities in reconciliation and stabilization efforts.
- Help internally displaced persons to obtain identification documents.
2. MAINTAINING DIVERSITY AND PLURALITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

- The Conference is a reminder of the need to reinforce the inclusive nature of institutions and to organize fair, responsible and inclusive participation of all the elements of society as regards public policy and missions that are overseen by the State; and that all of this must be done at the State level, through central and regional governments.

- The international community reiterates its support for the Prime Minister of Iraq, Mr Abadi, and praises the reconciliation process that he has initiated with measures aimed at contributing to national reconciliation, promoting inclusiveness, strengthening social cohesion and reforming the security sector.

- The international community reiterates its support for the work carried out by UNAMI

- The objective of ensuring full, equal citizenship for all people is also reaffirmed.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

RECONCILIATION:

- Facilitation of local reconciliation processes, promoting diversity, rebuilding trust among communities, and addressing the root causes of violent extremism. Encourage religious and community leaders to denounce violence that propagates hatred, sectarianism and religious and cultural intolerance and take a leading role in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

- Promote intercultural dialogue and inter-faith and intra-faith dialogue in the Middle East. Support the work of international organizations and institutions such as the UN Alliance of Civilizations, KAICIID, and the Anna Lindh Foundation in this field, particularly with regard to young people.

EDUCATION:

- Tolerance and inclusion training programs for teachers and students.

- Emphasize education and youth outreach. Promotion of an education project on tolerance with youth, including social media.

- Support curriculum reform with a view to promote tolerance, including through the teaching of the history of cultural diversity in the region, as well as respect for cultural diversity in secular and religious schools in the Middle East.

- De-radicalization programs and child soldiers’ reintegration.
SECURITY SECTOR REFORM:

- Support programs for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Iraq.

3. PROTECTING ENDANGERED HERITAGE

- Safeguarding and promoting the millennia-old heritage of the Middle East is an essential component of efforts to maintain cultural diversity and promote trust and confidence between communities in the region.

- Support to the implementation of the Strategy for reinforcing UNESCO’s action for the protection of Culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of Armed Conflict, adopted in 2015, and its relevant Action Plan, including the “Response Plan on the Protection and Conservation of Cultural Heritage in Liberated Areas of Iraq”, which is being prepared based on the recommendation of the International Conference co-organized by the Ministry of Culture of Iraq and UNESCO and held in February 2015, at UNESCO Headquarters (Paris).

- Need to strengthen international cooperation to ensure the full implement of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, including 2253 and 2347, as well as resolutions 1483 and 2199 which impose a ban on trade of Iraqi and Syrian cultural heritage, to fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

- Comprehensive damage assessment of religious heritage, that has been affected/destroyed during the conflict, and identify short and mid-term needs for recovery;

- Restoration of destroyed religious heritage monuments and sites, with specific significance for ethnic and religious communities in the Middle East. Restoration of shared religious heritage, notably the site of Nabu Younis/the tomb of Jonah in Mosul, as a priority given its contribution both to cultural recovery and social cohesion;

- Planning recovery of historical cities, emblems of cultural diversity – notably Aleppo and Mosul, giving equal attention to physical rehabilitation and to the rebuilding of a social fabric of cultural diversity; Provide technical assistance and training to the Iraqi and Syrian heritage profession and communities with a view to enhance capacity for protection and conservation the heritage sites.
4. FIGHTING IMPUNITY AND ENSURING JUSTICE

- Condemnation in the strongest terms the heinous crimes committed, especially by Daesh and its affiliated groups, against civilian populations from all ethnic, religious or other backgrounds. The atrocities committed in Iraq and Syria, which may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, or even genocide in the case of certain communities, are a source of concern for the entire international community and must not go unpunished.

- Support actions aimed at documenting Daesh’s widespread violations of international humanitarian law and the human rights of minorities in Iraq and Syria and obtaining recognition of the nature of the crimes committed

- Support a role of the International Criminal Court handling the most serious crimes, in particular regarding crimes committed on the basis of religion or ethnicity.

- Preservation of evidence of crimes is a priority. Support to the launch of an initiative by the UN Secretary General to promote the creation of a mechanism –with no jurisdictional scope– to gather and preserve evidence of the crimes committed by Daesh in Iraq.

- The competent United Nations bodies are invited to continue their work on the violent acts committed and their reporting thereof.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

EVIDENCE COLLECTION:

SUPPORT ACCOUNTABILITY EFFORTS:
- Technical assistance for the Iraqi police force and judiciary.
- Establishment of Memorials and/or National Day of Remembrance to foster reconciliation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS:
- Mental health counseling programs for IDPs in Iraq and in receiving countries. Training programs for mental counselors and development of undergraduate training programs.

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The participants are asked to take concrete action to pursue the goals of the Conference, protect the threatened communities in the Middle East and preserve the diversity of the region.
The United Nations agencies have presented the following projects and programmes to the Conference in order to pursue the implementation of actions in the priority areas identified:

- Project for capacity building of the Minority Directorate of the National Reconciliation Committee in the Prime Minister’s Office of Iraq by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI);
- Housing recovery and Properties restitutions Programme for Iraqi Minorities in Nineveh by United Nations-HABITAT;
- Protection of Minority Children in Agricultural Labour Project by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO);
- Support for Integrated Reconciliation Project by the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP);
- Launch of a regional educational and cultural initiative entitled “Exploring the Past, Building a Future of Coexistence: An initiative for intercultural skills and dialogue in the Middle East by UNESCO.

The UN agencies have expressed the intention to convene an experts’ meeting in New York and in the region for follow-up on these actions and projects.

The participants in the Conference are invited to draw these priorities to carry out concrete actions ahead of the follow-up conference, announced for 2018 by the Government of Belgium.