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COUNCIL**

Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat

ELEMENTS FOR AN EU REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR SYRIA AND IRAQ AS WELL AS THE DA'ESH THREAT

Summary

On 20 October 2014, the Foreign Affairs Council expressed the EU's resolve to tackle in a comprehensive and coordinated manner the crises in Syria and Iraq and the threat posed by Da'esh¹. To this end, it called on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission to develop an EU comprehensive regional strategy.

The purpose of this Joint Communication is to outline actions that the EU and its Member States will undertake to help restore peace and security in Syria and Iraq. The actions are based on in-depth analyses of the situations in both countries and the contributing factors to the current crises which include repressive dictatorial rule, armed conflicts, exclusionist and corrupt governance, human rights abuses, sectarian divisions, a sense of disenfranchisement of sections of the Sunni population as well as tensions between regional powers with their negative impact on the internal affairs of Syria and Iraq.

The EU response outlined here builds on the existing analyses and strategies², and seeks to:

- Identify EU interests and set out the EU contribution to the broader international effort to achieve lasting peace and security in Syria, Iraq and the wider region as well as counter the Da'esh threat;*
- Achieve complementarity between the action of the EU and EU Member States, through joint ownership of the strategy and the identification of common goals;*
- Address the commonalities of the crises in Iraq and Syria (principally the terrorist threat and the serious humanitarian implications that these crises have provoked) as well as their specificities;*
- Encourage the countries of the region to take particular responsibility for ending the crises and tackling Da'esh's and other terrorist groups' violent extremism which threatens them in the first place, and offer appropriate EU support to their efforts;*
- Recognise the inherent limitations of security and counter-terrorism intervention, however necessary military action may be in the short term. The EU's response therefore emphasises the need for a sustained and comprehensive engagement to address the underlying dynamics of the conflict through diplomatic engagement and long-term support for political reforms, socio-economic development and ethno-sectarian reconciliation.*

The actions presented in this joint communication are mutually reinforcing and therefore must to be carried out broadly in parallel. The detailed order of priority of different actions proposed will need to be determined dynamically in the course of the implementation of this

¹ The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, whose acronym in Arabic is Da'esh.

² Communication JOIN(2013)22 of 24 June 2013 'Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis'; 'EU Counter-terrorism/foreign fighters strategy' adopted by Foreign Affairs Council of 20 October 2014, ref 14451/14

strategy, as the EU must respond to evolving circumstances on the ground and seek complementarity with the efforts of the international community.

In order to achieve its objectives and ensure the effectiveness of its response, the EU must secure sustainable and predictable funding commensurate to the unprecedented level of needs in the region. The Commission therefore proposes an aid package of EUR 1 billion from the EU budget for years 2015 and 2016. The details of this proposal are set out in the Financial Statement annexed to this communication.

1- CONTEXT

The need for a comprehensive EU policy framework for Syria and Iraq

The Middle-East is currently experiencing a profound crisis. The conflicts in Syria and Iraq are both a reflection and a driver of this crisis, with the growing potential to destabilise neighbouring countries and the wider region. These crises have created a humanitarian disaster affecting more than 13.5 million people forced to flee their homes (3.8 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries -with UNHCR predicting 4.3 million by the end of 2015- and 7.6 million internally displaced persons in Syria alone), and more than 17 million people in need of humanitarian aid (12.2 in Syria and 5.2 in Iraq).

Following more than four years of brutal conflict in Syria, Da'esh's declared endeavour to act as an alternative, ideologically radical state has proven appealing to extremists in the region and beyond, particularly in areas, in Syria and Iraq, where state authority has collapsed and where a feeling of political and socio-economic marginalisation prevailed.

As an important actor in the region, the EU has a responsibility to ensure that it uses its influence and its numerous instruments effectively and coherently to defend human lives, human dignity and rights, and help resolve these crises, in close coordination with regional and international partners. In particular, this strategy will draw on and complement the *EU counter-terrorism/foreign fighters strategy* and the Joint Communication: *Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis*. In addition, there are compelling reasons of self-interest for the EU to increase its engagement in Syria, Iraq and the neighbouring countries. These include: the breach of universally recognized values and rights that are at the heart of the European foreign policy; the risk of a breakdown of public authority and political chaos in overstretched refugee-hosting countries such as Lebanon and Jordan, adding to the migratory pressures resulting from population displacement and related trafficking in human beings; Da'esh's control of territory spanning two states; the risk of contagion of Da'esh's brand of terrorism to other countries and further destabilisation of the region; the threat to the EU's security posed by EU nationals (and others) who have joined terrorist groups as foreign terrorist fighters; the opportunity cost of losing Syria and Iraq as partners for a lasting Middle East peace, as trade partners and energy providers; and the loss of cultural heritage.

Background

Syria experienced a period of repressive stability and inter-confessional coexistence since a military coup in 1966 introduced the autocratic Baath party's rule. Bashar al-Assad came to power following his father's death in 2000 with promises of political and gradual economic reform that were insufficiently fulfilled. The opening of Syria's economy and the growth of the private sector that ensued, unveiled large social imbalances. Necessary structural reforms,

which the EU encouraged by offering Syria the prospect of an Association Agreement³, were never fully carried out. Liberalisation of the national economy led to an economic growth which largely benefited the elites associated to the regime and its security apparatus and did not translate into sustained and equitable development.

In 2011, Syrian peaceful protest movements with democratic aspirations, inspired by 'Arab Spring' movements in other countries and driven by a sense of frustration with the prevailing non inclusive political and economic order, were brutally repressed by the Assad regime. This pushed a portion of the Syrian population into armed rebellion. The Assad regime's brutal repression of protest and insurgency, massive human rights violations and systematic obstruction of democratic reforms, and the continuation of the conflict without a clear end in sight have led gradually to the increased power of extremist groups at the cost of the moderate opposition. The warring parties received support from external powers, further exacerbating the situation. Jabhat al-Nusra, the official arm of al-Qaeda in Syria, and then Da'esh, enhanced their attractiveness and capabilities. In 2014, Da'esh in particular managed to extend its control over oil and gas-rich areas in eastern Syria, western Iraq and border crossings along the Syria-Turkey border that it previously disputed with other armed groups.

In **Iraq**, the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 was followed by instability, sectarian strife and terrorist violence that were met by intensive efforts by the international community, including the EU, to support Iraq's transition. In 2012, the EU signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Iraq. But while a democratic constitution was put in place, oil production rose and macroeconomic stability improved, Iraq's transition was hampered by continuing violence, political instability, authoritarian rule, exclusionist government policies, high corruption and lack of structural economic reforms.

These negative trends accelerated following the departure of US troops at the end of 2011. In particular, many Sunnis felt increasingly alienated from the post-2003 political settlement due to: marginalisation from political decision making; economic and social underdevelopment of Sunni areas leading to inadequate provision of basic services; arbitrary application of 'de-Baathification' legislation; exclusion of Saddam-era military staff from the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF); heavy-handed policing of Sunni areas, including the documented killing of Sunni citizens; a poor human rights framework; and widespread corruption and nepotism. At the same time the Shia community was finding its feet in the new order after years of Sunni-dominated oppression, with the Shia-dominated government never gaining full acceptance across the country. Sunni terrorist attacks against the Shia population contributed to deepening the sectarian divide. Starting in 2013 portions of the Sunni population rebelled against the federal government, opening the door for the resurgence of al-Qaeda inspired terrorist groups, in particular Da'esh and neo-Baathist groups which in June 2014 took over large swathes of territory in western and northern Iraq.

Da'esh has thus harnessed and exploited the discontent of parts of the Sunni population in both Syria and Iraq to further its objectives.

The threat posed by Da'esh to Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries

Da'esh and other terrorist groups pose a new kind of threat for Syria, Iraq, the broader region and the international community as a whole.

³ The Association Agreement was negotiated between 1997 and 2004 and revisited in 2008 but never signed.

- Da'esh is a cross-border phenomenon spanning two sovereign states, with the intent to act as a state (control of territory, organisation of revenues to finance a central budget, imposition of taxes, provision of basic services, etc.). Its highly visible terrorist and criminal actions in Syria and Iraq are coupled with military actions that resemble an insurgency. It has received pledges of allegiance and support from like-minded organisations in several Arab, African and Asian countries.
- Da'esh cynically exploits images of the Golden Age of Islamic political history. The Caliphate is presented as the embodiment of aspirations for political and cultural unity. It has declared ambitions to widen its territory to neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Gulf countries. Its territorial ambitions, capabilities, forms of outreach and networking, in particular thanks to a sophisticated use of the social media, are unprecedented. Its actions have appeal with other groups in the region, in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and in Asia. Some of these have expressed allegiance to Da'esh. The announcement of the so-called 'Caliphate', followed by the launch of an international military action to tackle this terrorist threat, have drawn a significant flow of foreign terrorist fighters joining the group in Syria and Iraq.
- As part of a deliberate tactic to enforce its authority in areas where the state authority has collapsed, Da'esh is perpetrating egregious abuses of human rights that amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, including mass murder of civilians, slavery, torture, arbitrary executions and widespread sexual and gender-based violence, targeting ethnic and religious minorities but also members of the Sunni communities perceived as a threat. This has already led to considerable population displacements in the region, caused significant trauma to displaced persons, in particular women and children, caused massive influx of refugees to neighbouring countries and also increased migration pressure on the EU.
- Da'esh encourages illicit excavations of archaeological and cultural objects and uses humanity heritage sites, including World Heritage properties, for military purposes, leading to their gradual destruction.
- It may now be a self-financing terrorist organisation with its revenues from sources such as the illegal sale of oil and other commodities, imposition of taxes, trafficking in human beings, illicit trafficking in cultural goods, kidnapping for ransom and looting (including bank robbery), thus removing its reliance on donations from regional sponsors.

The Kurdish question

The upsurge of violence has encouraged Kurdish communities to reinforce self-rule, or to seek independence, with concomitant implications for the integrity, and potentially the long term stability, of both countries.

In Iraq, differences between the Kurdistan region and the federal government that have been left unresolved for a number of years, such as the adoption of a permanent mechanism for revenue sharing (hydrocarbons law) and the status of the disputed territories, are now adding to the overall burden of tasks that the Iraqi government needs to tackle urgently in addition to the efforts it is making to defeat Da'esh.

Kurds in Syria were coerced by the Syrian regime to stay out of the Syrian uprising since early 2011 in exchange for de facto autonomy in the mainly Kurdish-populated regions of the northeast of Syria. Since the emergence of Da'esh, Syrian Kurds have been in the front-line of the fight against Da'esh, together with Kurds from neighbouring countries. First, they defended mainly Kurd-populated areas in Syria (2013) and in Iraq (Mount Sinjar in 2014) and

access from Syria to the rest of the Iraq's Kurdistan region. Subsequently, they also defended the besieged city of Kobani and other mainly Kurdish-populated self-proclaimed 'autonomous cantons'.

Any EU support for Kurdish armed resistance to Da'esh must be accompanied by strong assurances to the states of the region of continued EU respect for their territorial integrity.

The risk of a spill-over to neighbouring countries

Lebanon

The conflict in Syria and the high number of registered and unregistered refugees in Lebanon (approximately 1.2 million in January 2015, representing more than 25% of the Lebanese population) is exacerbating existing tensions within Lebanese society, institutions and communities and it is also placing a strain on scarce natural resources. While the Lebanese Government opted for the so-called 'disassociation policy' from the conflict in Syria, based on the Baabda Declaration of June 2012, Hezbollah and Sunni terrorist groups have gradually enhanced their direct participation in the conflict. Clashes between the Lebanese security forces and Syrian armed groups in and around Aarsal in eastern Bekaa in August 2014 and repeated clashes in Tripoli highlighted the threat posed to northern Lebanon in particular.

Jordan

Jordan has a far more homogeneous population than Lebanon, at least insofar as religious affiliation is concerned. But the presence of more than 600,000 Syrian refugees in the country is placing strain on service delivery and on scarce natural resources, in particular water. As in Lebanon, the issue of access to education and work opportunities entails risks for the future and needs to be addressed.

Turkey

With more than 1.65 million Syrian refugees on Turkish soil (government figures), Turkey is now hosting the largest refugee community from Syria. It has also been providing significant humanitarian assistance (more than 4 billion dollars since 2011 according to government estimates). Turkey is calling for enhanced international support to deal with the consequences of the crisis.

2- OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of this strategy is to counter the threat posed by Da'esh and other terrorist groups to regional and international stability, and simultaneously to create the conditions for an inclusive political transition in Syria and lasting stability in Syria and Iraq as well as in refugee-hosting countries in the region, while alleviating the human suffering caused by the ongoing violence and displacement.

The strategy foresees a mix of political-level and official-level diplomatic engagement, communication work and practical support measures. In order to achieve its objectives and ensure the effectiveness of its response, the EU must secure sustainable and predictable funding commensurate to the unprecedented level of needs in the region. The Commission therefore proposes an aid package of EUR 1 billion from the EU budget for years 2015 and 2016. The details of this proposal are set out in the Financial Statement annexed to this communication.

An important requirement for the success of the EU's strategy is the achievement of synergy and complementarity between EU and EU Member State actions both at political and operational levels. At political level, this strategy should provide the framework for better

aligning EU and Member States diplomatic efforts. At operational level in particular, the strategy should provide an overall framework to increase funding as well as EU donor co-ordination and joint programming (including through the EU regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the ‘Madad fund’). Member States are urged to continue to mobilise assistance at bilateral level in order to ensure that their collective response at least matches the effort made through the EU budget.

Humanitarian aid will continue to be delivered to vulnerable populations on the basis of needs and in full respect of the internationally recognised humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

2.1 OBJECTIVES COMMON TO SYRIA, IRAQ AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRIES

2.1.1 Promote regional engagement in support of security and long-term peace

Sustained EU high level diplomacy in the region is crucial to contribute to the necessary changes. Countries of the region, notably the Gulf States, Egypt, Turkey and Iran, are in many ways directly concerned and better placed, in the view of public opinion in the Middle East, to contribute to the fight against Da'esh than those of the broader international community. They also have an interest in doing so, since any spill-over of the crises in Syria and Iraq threatens them in the first place. Furthermore, rivalries between key regional actors are among the drivers of violence and sectarian tensions in Syria, Iraq and other affected countries upon which Da'esh thrives. For all these reasons, regional actors must be actively encouraged by the EU to take special responsibility for addressing the Da'esh threat and promoting peace in the region, focussing on areas where their interests converge. The EU also needs to encourage and strengthen moderate voices in the region and promote an alternative vision to that of terrorist groups.

Means of EU engagement:

Focused political and diplomatic engagement with the countries of the region bilaterally and collectively through the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, as well as with other supporting countries and organisations. Beyond a clear condemnation of Da'esh, this should include dialogue on cultural diversity, religion and ideology with a view to countering violent extremism, support for science diplomacy and other forms of people-to-people contacts, and efforts to reduce misapprehensions within the EU on developments in the region.

2.1.2 Isolate and defeat Da'esh as a military force and as a terrorist organisation and counter its ideological influence

○ Support and strengthen the anti-Da'esh forces

The military response of the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh⁴ foresees air strikes against Da'esh forces as well as the supply of lethal and non-lethal equipment, training and intelligence support to Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), Kurdish Peshmerga and, insofar as this is practicable, to the moderate opposition in Syria. The Council has not adopted any decision to engage at the level of the EU in military operations to this effect. Nor has the

⁴ The Global Coalition was launched in September 2014 and has the support of over 60 countries, including key countries in the region. The EU supports the efforts of this coalition, including military action in accordance with international law.

EU been tasked with coordinating, or acting as a clearing house for information about the supply of arms or other military assistance, although this could be envisaged. In addition, the EU needs to ensure that its own lines of effort remain appropriately flexible and responsive to the unfolding military operations.

○ **Stem the influx of foreign terrorist fighters, funds, and arms to Da'esh**

Pursuant to the *EU counter-terrorism/foreign fighters strategy*, which is part of this comprehensive regional strategy, the EU will step up efforts to isolate Da'esh and prevent the flow of resources it requires for its operations, in accordance with relevant UNSC Resolutions and in full respect to EU and international human rights standards. This requires open and enhanced political dialogue with Turkey and the Gulf States, coordinated with other partners (including the US). Such a dialogue would be linked with practical capacity building support in order to ensure that the countries in the region are able to handle the foreign fighters threat effectively and also that sanctions and other measures against Da'esh are effectively applied, through enhancement of border controls. An associated aim of these measures is to track down individuals involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes, tackle corruption and smuggling which is benefiting Da'esh and take legal action against those involved. Furthermore, enhanced control of financial flows through financial institutions as well as traditional financial networks will be required.

The EU will also seek to prevent violent extremism in the countries of the region, de-radicalisation programmes and radicalisation prevention. EU capacity building support in the field of counter-terrorism/foreign fighters will need to be provided as a matter of priority taking into consideration the partner countries' capacity to meet benchmarks on human rights and civil and political freedoms. A key area of reform which the EU should support is the reform of counter terrorism laws in countries of the region.

For the credibility of the counter terrorist effort, it is essential to distinguish between Da'esh and other terrorist organisations on the one hand and groups espousing non-violent forms of political Islam on the other. An objective of EU diplomacy must be to warn against the risk that suppression of such groups can lead to their radicalisation. It is important to ensure that partner countries' law enforcement measures are necessary and proportionate, and do not reduce minimum standards of protection of human rights.

Means of EU engagement: The EU's engagement in this domain will be made up of Member State and EU actions, based on the assessment of their feasibility and evolving priorities. It should include political and expert-level engagement with the relevant institutions of the countries of the region; EU Member States contributions; and Instrument *contributing to Stability and Peace* (IcSP), *European Neighbourhood Instrument* (ENI) and *CFSP* financing where appropriate. EU actions must be implemented in compliance with the EU Charter of fundamental rights.

Foreign fighters

- Actions aiming to stem the flow of foreign fighters to Syria/Iraq and deal with returnees (to be defined in more detail in early 2015 according to the objectives set in the *EU counter-terrorism/foreign fighters strategy*).
- Support to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan to enhance border security.
- Capacity-building in the region to implement UNSCR 2178, as well as in the area of border management and security, including explosive trace detection and expertise on airport infrastructure and layout.

- Reinforcement of police and judiciary international cooperation to: support investigations and prosecutions of foreign fighters; track and record movements of foreign fighters, including through the adoption of EU legislation on exchanges of Passenger Name Records with the EU's main partners in accordance with the principles of proportionality as regards any restrictions on the rights to data protection; identify criminal sources of financing including trafficking in human beings; disrupt illicit weapons/ammunitions supply channels; and prevent the criminal use of internet for terrorist recruitment and dissemination of terrorist practices.
- Development of a joint internal and external security approach and related experts networks to address evolving Da'esh communication and propaganda methodologies.
- Cooperation with the International Criminal Court, including collection of evidence, identification of criminals and collection of testimonies given by witnesses.

Counter-narrative and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

- Support to communication campaigns carried out by relevant actors in Syria, Iraq and in the region (including in countries of origin of foreign fighters) to discredit Da'esh's ideology and denounce its violations of human rights and to counter violent extremism and hate speech linked to other groups in the region.
- Support to countering violent extremism projects in Lebanon and Jordan and possibly other countries in the region, targeting the most exposed segments of the populations, in particular the youth.
- Preventing radicalisation in prisons through an integrated programme of reintegration or disengagement for detained or returning members of terrorist groups, in the region and in the EU.
- Encouragement to the governments and relevant societal actors in the region to take targeted measures to prevent and curb radicalisation and incitement in public places (including universities).

Terrorist financing/sanctions

- Support UN sanctions, including designations and measures targeting Da'esh's finances. Proper implementation and monitoring (through international consultations).
- Capacity-building support for neighbouring countries to counter terrorist financing and related corruption.
- Encouragement of listing requests to the UN's al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee for its consideration of additional designations of individuals and entities supporting Da'esh in line with UNSC Resolution 2170, for example middlemen in the black market for oil in Syria and Iraq.
- If needed, the EU could create an autonomous sanctions regime to supplement the UN al-Qaeda sanction regime. Any such sanctions regime must comply with the EU Charter of fundamental rights and the Kadi jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the EU⁵.

⁵ See in particular 'Kadi II' judgement of 18 July 2013 (Joined Cases C-584/10 P, C-593/10 P and C-595/10P)

- Encourage criminal investigations and judicial cooperation aimed at prosecuting foreign fighters and terrorist recruiting organisations and the confiscation of their criminal assets and tools.

Continued EU support to conflict-affected, refugee and displaced populations (livelihood and education in particular) and endeavours to build community resilience while addressing basic needs can also constitute effective means to reduce the attractiveness of terrorist groups.

2.1.3 Prevent regional spill-overs and enhance border security

It will be crucial to prevent Da'esh from gaining a covert or overt presence in neighbouring countries. Lebanon in particular has suffered terrorist attacks orchestrated by Da'esh associates in the country. Jordan has managed to contain any form of violence despite localised minor demonstrations of popular sympathy for Da'esh. Turkey, which is engaged in a delicate peace process with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), has received criticism that it is giving insufficient priority to the fight against Da'esh. Turkey also faces the risk of terrorist infiltration. Preventing regional spill-overs of the Syrian and Iraqi crisis will require a substantial increase in the level of assistance provided to neighbouring countries to help them cope with the refugee influx (see 2.1.5).

Support to Lebanon and Jordan is required in the field of security and border management. A Dialogue on migration, mobility and security with Lebanon started in December 2014 while a Mobility Partnership with Jordan was signed in October 2014. In addition the following should be envisaged:

- continued EU and Member States support to Lebanon's security sector reform and the implementation of EU support to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in areas such as civil-military cooperation, maritime security, border security, counter terrorism and military training and education;
- further support, as appropriate, aimed at (i) enhancing capacity to plan and conduct operations; (ii) enhancing LAF's logistical system; (iii) setting up a training cycle for the LAF; (iv) assisting the LAF with Border Management and Border Security; (v) development of a future-oriented LAF border forces security concept; (vi) improvement of LAF role in counter-terrorism with a focus on legislative, strategic and institutional aspects; and (vii) reviewing the LAF education and training system; and
- establishment of a security dialogue with Jordan to review the security situation in the region and help pave the way for enhanced security and counter-terrorism cooperation. Assessment of the needs of the Jordan security forces (including Land Border Regiments) in that context and consideration of options to complement the support that Jordan will receive as part of the NATO's Defence Capacity Building Initiative.

As for Turkey, the following are envisaged:

- continued support to Turkey for the implementation of its National Action Plan for the establishment of Integrated Border Management, including through the reform and modernisation of surveillance techniques along its land borders and controls at border crossing points; and
- the already ongoing EU-Turkey dialogue on counter-terrorism may contribute to identify areas where specific EU support could be offered to Turkish authorities with the aim of strengthening their capacity to control the flow of persons and materials across their borders and to identify and detect persons requiring close surveillance, firearms, explosives and other dangerous substances.

Means of EU engagement: IcSP, ENI, IPA and Member States contributions.

2.1.4 Provide life-saving humanitarian aid and international protection

The EU has been the leading international donor in response to the Syrian crisis with more than EUR 3.3 billion - including more than EUR 2 billion in humanitarian assistance - allocated to the affected populations in Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries (most notably Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt). While needs are growing further, the EU and its Member States should continue to provide humanitarian assistance and international protection to affected Syrians and Iraqis, including refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), for a prolonged period within Syria and Iraq as well as in neighbouring countries and EU countries. It is also essential to link the humanitarian efforts better with displaced persons' mid to long term assistance to displaced people, in particular children and young people, as means to promote resilience, recovery and post-conflict reintegration and development, and to counter potential radicalisation amongst refugee populations. Given the severe limitations on the EU budget, additional innovative ways of funding have to be jointly explored with EU Member States.

Means of EU engagement:

Coordination:

Continue to provide support to the UN-led coordination system, in accordance with the EU consensus on Humanitarian Aid and International Humanitarian Law.

Access:

- Use of all possible models of delivery (including cross-border and cross-line assistance) to ensure access to all people in need including those in hard-to-reach areas (4.8 million people in Syria, 3.6 million across Iraq by mid-January 2015).
- Proactive engagement with all parties to the conflict to increase the humanitarian space in Syria and Iraq and access to all people in need.
- Reinforce the UN's capacity to negotiate access, in particular in Syria and Iraq through OCHA, and ensure better coordination, in particular between cross-border and cross-line operations.
- Strengthen capacity-building of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to deliver assistance.

Protection:

- Ensure the protection of affected populations; promote international, refugee and humanitarian law.
- Insist with the authorities of affected countries that government policies must comply with International Humanitarian Law, so as to prevent refoulement or the creation of informal unprotected camps in non-man's land zones, guarantee that proper registration and documentation mechanisms for IDPs and refugees are set up, and that vulnerable displaced persons and refugees, women and children in particular, have access to legal advice and adequate protection. Furthermore support the UNHCR's and other actors' efforts to ensure government policies meet these standards.
- Continue to advocate for the safety and protection of humanitarian aid workers and the inviolability of health and educational facilities.

Civil/military relations

- Reinforce UN-led civil/military coordination and liaison to ensure compliance with International Humanitarian Law and the respect of humanitarian principles while mitigating risks for the security of humanitarian actors and improving access to populations in need.

Country-specific approaches

- Encourage the UN to pursue non-discriminatory and all-inclusive country-specific approaches ("Whole of Syria" and "All of Iraq").
- Continue to advocate for integrated and prioritised humanitarian and development appeals and joint gap analysis, as well as the implementation of the 3RPs (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan) through national response plans in neighbouring countries.

Rapid Response Capacity and monitoring

- Strengthen a country wide and multi-sectoral early warning system.
- Scale-up preparedness and rapid response capacities by integrating greater flexibility into existing agreements with partners, in order to respond better to emerging needs, establish contingency stock arrangements, and considering contributions to existing emergency response funds.

Public diplomacy and visibility of aid

- Enhance communication about EU humanitarian and development assistance both in the region and in the EU, if needed on the basis of reviewed communication/visibility guidelines.

Cater to displaced persons longer-term development needs

- Focus part of the EU's development assistance in Syria and Iraq as well as in neighbouring countries on displaced persons' needs, in particular education for children and vocational training or retraining for adults focusing on the jobs needed in a post conflict environment. Such vocational training should include training for women in order to boost their economic and social role in post-conflict reconstruction.

Resettlement and asylum

- Continue to support the long term capacity of host states to address refugee flows in particular through the Regional Development and Protection Programmes (RDPPs) in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, and by helping Turkey to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees and supporting it in the establishment and operation of a modern and stable asylum system.
- Continue to offer resettlement prospects to Syrian refugees (and where appropriate Iraqis) in the EU. While UNHCR made a call to the international community for the resettlement/humanitarian admission of at least 130,000 Syrians, in particular the most vulnerable individuals. EU Member States have pledged some 36,000 places, making it the largest pledge in the history of EU resettlement efforts. The Commission supports resettlement efforts under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

2.1.5 Strengthen local resilience capacities in Syria, Iraq and the affected neighbouring countries

To prevent more recruitment by Da'esh, as well as future violence in and between displaced populations and host communities, assistance and perspectives for a better future for these populations are essential. Humanitarian efforts must be linked with the affected person's longer term development needs as a means to promote post-conflict reintegration and development and to counter potential extremism amongst refugee populations and host communities. Basic rule of law, provision of basic services and economic activities should be re-established quickly in areas freed from Da'esh both in Syria and Iraq, to avoid Da'esh gaining any further appeal and to create minimum conditions for the voluntary return of IDPs and refugees in safety and dignity.

These actions should aim at supporting the resilience of individuals, communities and institutions in coping with the effects of the crisis.

In parallel to this assistance, high-level political dialogue both collectively and bilaterally with the countries hosting Syrian refugees is needed to ensure that protection and perspectives can be offered to refugees (notably on access to education, labour market, etc.).

Means of EU engagement:

Resilience/recovery assistance and support to local communities and social actors in Syria, Iraq and the neighbouring countries through the 'Madad fund', IcSP, and direct Member States contributions, in particular:

- build upon existing joint humanitarian aid/development frameworks in the field and establish joint programming in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey;
- use the 'Madad fund' for stabilisation and resilience aid to refugee and host communities in Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt. This needs to be achieved in a holistic way, in coordination with existing funding mechanisms and in line with current national government planning and the UN 3RP approach;
- support governments of the region to pursue policies conducive to enhanced economic resilience among refugee and host communities, promote prospects for young people and respect gender equality; and
- implement the programme of additional assistance to Turkey announced following the Kobani crisis, aimed at supporting the effort of Turkish authorities to provide long-term hospitality and assistance to the Syrian refugees sheltered in Turkey.

More generally, engagement with relevant diaspora organisations in Europe should be envisaged to enhance the EU's outreach and boost the effectiveness of its actions.

2.2 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES - SYRIA

2.2.1 Work towards a political transition

In coherence with the objectives and actions set out in the Joint Communication '*Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis*', the EU will continue to explore all ways and means of resuming the political process in coordination with regional and international partners in order to achieve a Syrian-led transition. More particularly, it should:

- fully support UN Special Envoy de Mistura's efforts to achieve a strategic de-escalation of violence as a basis for a broader sustainable political process; support concretely the development of his proposals, in particular the proposal to build on local freezes of hostility in accordance with international humanitarian law; within this approach,

principled humanitarian and resilience action should remain distinct and separate from political and security negotiations;

- support local and international mediation and dialogue efforts, including initiatives promoting local-level agreements and other local peacebuilding initiatives that may include cross-line cooperation with due consideration to the participation of women;
- seek international consensus at the level of the UNSC and seek regional consensus (shared interests include our resolve to protect the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria and to fight against terrorism) and regional support for a Syrian led political process leading to a transition, in accordance with relevant UNSC Resolutions and the Geneva Communique of 30 June 2012; and
- encourage the establishment of a support group for the efforts of the UNSG or the Special Envoy in Syria to forge a broader consensus in favour of a national political process in that spirit.

Means of EU engagement: Political and diplomatic engagement with the countries of the region and international partners with the objective to de-escalate the regional tensions on the one hand and the war between the Assad regime and the armed opposition on the other while incentivising a Syrian broad based transition on the basis of the Geneva Communique. Increase pressure on the Assad regime, notably through further targeted sanctions and other appropriate restrictive measures with limited impact on the civilian population. Enforce robustly EU oil sanctions against Syria and lobby third countries to do so. Increase dialogue with partners, especially in the region.

Reinforce the political staff of the EU Delegation for Syria (which will remain hosted by the EU Delegation in Beirut). As long as conditions for the reopening of the EU Delegation in Damascus are not met, regular visits to Syria will continue to take place.

2.2.2 Strengthen the moderate opposition and civil society actors

- Continue to support the moderate opposition, including the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC), but not excluding any other constructive domestic civil society or political forces, with a view to fostering its inclusivity (including religious and ethnic minorities), efficiency and equal opportunities. There will not be lasting peace in Syria if the specific grievances of all ethnic and religious groups are not equally addressed and the country's multi-ethnic and multi-religious character is not maintained.
- Continue to explore and support where appropriate track 2 and track 3 initiatives that could help shape eventually a transition model based on the inclusion of credible opponents in a new transition Government, and a stabilisation process at local and national levels. Special attention will be given to the participation of women in these initiatives.
- Continue to support the capacity-building of Syrian civil society organizations.

Means of EU engagement: continued support to peace-building and mediation efforts with a focus on building the capacities of internal civil society actors and resilience activities through the IcSP and ENI.

2.2.3 Provide basic services and contribute to rebuilding an administration in areas of reduced violence

- Enhance the level of cross-border and cross-lines provision of non-humanitarian assistance in Syria.

- Help the moderate opposition and civil-society entities re-establish an administration and public services (including civil protection, health, education), as well as overall economic activity, in areas of reduced violence, in areas previously occupied by Da'esh, and in the mainly Syrian Kurdish populated regions of the north of Syria.
- Support the delivery of basic services in key areas, based on the principles of inclusivity, good governance and community consultation, and support resilience activities, including sustainable management and protection of natural resources.

Means of EU engagement:

Reinforced resilience / recovery assistance such as targeted EU or Member State funded activities supporting local communities and social actors (including operations managed from Gaziantep with the participation of several Member States), supported through the 'Madad fund', IcSP or ENI.

In the short-term, EU civil society projects funded through the ENI (17 million euros) and the IcSP (12 million euros) will contribute to the capacity-building of Syrian civil society organisations, provision of basic services, rule of law measures and the development of an inclusive, participatory political environment at local level. Targeted programmes for minorities could also be explored in order to ensure the safety of all ethnic and religious communities, ensure an inclusive transition, meet special needs and support their reintegration in society.

2.2.4 Promote human rights/international humanitarian law and ensure accountability

- Continue to investigate and document war crimes and crimes against humanity, in particular in support of possible future criminal accountability.
- Work with partners in support of the UN Commission of Inquiry and other accountability initiatives to prepare for an accountability process and to challenge the culture of impunity.
- Continue to support the activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in particular the verification mission and the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and production facilities.
- Continue to seek ways to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and support complementary accountability mechanisms, including at national level.

Means of EU engagement: Diplomatic engagement, including at the level of the UNSC and practical support to human rights defenders through the IcSP and the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights* (EIDHR), judicial cooperation.

2.2.5 Prepare for the 'day after'

- Continue to plan for long term recovery and the reconstruction of Syria and pave the way for the return and re-integration of refugees and internally displaced persons, notably through regular damage and needs assessments in Syria.
- Continue building the capacities of Syrian citizens and Syrian civil society, including organisations that promote gender equality and empowerment, to allow ordinary Syrians to play an active role in Syria's reconstruction.

- Explore further opportunities for Syrian students and researchers through scholarships in Europe and vocational training opportunities in the region.
- Continue to identify opportunities for building capacity and skills of Syrians to steer the transition (in areas such as media regulation, decentralisation, administration of municipalities, constitution drafting, etc.) with due consideration to women's needs and role.
- Continue to carefully plan for a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process as part of a security sector reform.
- Continue to assess regularly whether the current conditions permit the preparation for and implementation of transitional justice measures designed to promote reconciliation, foster trust and strengthen the rule of law.
- Carefully pave the ground for constitution and electoral reform, including the political party laws.
- Reflect on means to protect the remaining cultural heritage and to promote cultural diversity, in particular through educational and sensitisation campaigns.
- Maintain the EU's leading role in donor coordination in order to enhance coherence, coordination and predictability of the international assistance to the reconstruction of Syria.
- Fully use the potential of the Erasmus+ programme which finances scholarships for the mobility of Syrian students and cooperation projects involving Syrian higher education institutions aiming at their modernisation. Explore further possibilities to support neighbouring countries and universities in providing higher education services to Syrian students.

The EU will pursue those efforts, bearing in mind that the collapse of State institutions in Syria must be avoided.

Means of EU engagement: ENI, 'Madad fund', IcSP ("Tahdir programme: Preparing for Transition in Syria"), trilateral agreement between the UN, the World Bank and the EU on Post-Conflict Needs Assessments, Erasmus+.

2.3 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES - IRAQ

2.3.1 Support the Iraqi government in making inclusiveness a reality

The main objective for the EU in Iraq must be to support an inclusive Iraqi government in its efforts to address Iraqi citizens' legitimate grievances and to promote a long-term process of state building and national reconciliation, based on the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution. The government's programme (2014-2018) and the Iraqi National Development Plan (2014-2017) are a good basis for this, and the EU-Iraq PCA, parts of which are already being applied on a provisional basis, provides a framework for cooperation on a wide range of issues. Whilst Sunni grievances need to be addressed, the rise of sectarianism and radicalisation across most Iraqi communities needs to be tackled comprehensively and across the whole country. The EU will seek to cooperate with UNAMI and UN agencies operating in Iraq as closely as possible.

o Engage with moderate marginalised Sunni groups

The Iraqi government should be supported in engaging with all components of Iraqi society, especially moderate religious and political groups, in order to give them a stake in Iraq's future. However, particular attention needs to be given to the Sunni community in

order to disengage the Sunni population from any support to Da'esh. This should be a step taken in parallel to any requests to these groups to resist and take up arms against Da'esh. Engagement with the Sunni community should spell out measures to address known grievances and promote reconciliation, to ensure the safety of the population (particularly groups that join in the fight against Da'esh) and to provide guarantees of future consultation on policy making. At the same time moderate Shia communities and civil society groups need to be supported to counter the stigmatisation and backlash against the Sunni community.

- **Engage with the Kurdistan region of Iraq**

The resolution of the federal government's disputes with the government of the Kurdistan region, including a final, lasting settlement on the transfer of oil revenues and the disputed territories, is a major priority and would significantly improve the political climate in Iraq. The EU should encourage the federal government and the Kurdistan regional government to agree a clear roadmap with timelines for the resolution of the disputes on the basis of constitutional provisions.

- **Consolidate democratically run state institutions and support political and legislative reform**

The EU and its Member States should support the Iraqi government in its efforts to launch a thorough administrative reform programme to boost the capacity of civilian government entities based on modern principles of administration and financial management. Fundamental principles of such a reform should be the separation of political and administrative positions, the creation of an independent civil service, and application of a non-sectarian equal opportunities policy based on qualifications and competence.

Support for initiatives for political and legislative reform, put forward by the government, civil society and other parties, within the framework of the Iraqi constitution should be considered, provided they advance national reconciliation and development.

- **Restructure the security sector**

Security sector reform covers a broad number of activities, ranging from support to military forces to reforms of the legal framework. Any future EU activity in this area needs to take into account the activities of the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh and the EU Member States' bilateral efforts in order to achieve complementarity. EU Member States are currently engaged in efforts to restructure and train the ISF. A corollary of the ISF's weakness has been the re-emergence of irregular militia who, whilst bolstering the efforts of the ISF, are also responsible for a number of atrocities and human rights violations. The progressive demobilisation of Shia militias and other armed groups, and their replacement by competent cross-sectarian Iraqi security forces is crucial to national reconciliation. The Iraqi government has a duty of care to ensure that it will be the only weapons holder, and will ban any armed formation outside the government framework, in line with the Iraq Constitution. At the same time the presence and competences of civilian police forces need to be strengthened.

- **Judicial reforms and mainstreaming respect for human rights**

Failures in rule of law lie at the heart of the crisis in Iraq. The EU and its Member States should consider enhancing their support to the Iraqi government in the introduction of measures strengthening the rule of law and the protection of human rights in all areas of Iraqi public life. This must include the reform of existing controversial legislation and its implementation, which have been drivers of radicalisation and resistance to the Iraqi

government. A determined effort must be made to strengthen the independence of institutions, especially the judiciary. Human rights training needs to be incorporated and mainstreamed in the curricula of civilian and military security forces, and cooperation of the security forces with legal institutions, as well as police oversight bodies, should be improved. The status and capacity of the Human Rights Commission should be enhanced. Greater respect for human rights in the penitentiary system will contribute to countering radicalisation. Judicial capacities to deal with terrorist organisations should be enhanced. The EU should encourage Iraq's accession to the Rome Statute with a view to enabling international prosecutions in the future. In all these endeavours it essential to learn the lessons from the EU's past support for justice reform efforts under the EUJUSTLEX mission. In the longer term, Iraq should be encouraged to set out a plan for the phasing out of the death penalty given its ineffectiveness and potential role in radicalisation.

○ **Strengthening regional and local administration**

The Iraqi constitution foresees the possibility of greater regional and local autonomy with the Iraqi government itself indicating in its programme that decentralisation would be a possibility. Greater political and financial autonomy in the running of provincial and local affairs, including local control of the local security apparatus, as well as greater proximity to the decision making process, can help address local grievances. This must, however, be coupled with a system to support the fair distribution of resources amongst the localities and cross-sectarian confidence-building measures between entities, for example through regional infrastructure and other cooperation projects.

Means of EU engagement:

Institutional issues

- Political and official-level contacts, notably in the framework of the PCA. In this regard, the speedy ratification of the PCA by EU Member States would send a strong signal of EU commitment.
- Given the Kurdistan region's key role in the fight against Da'esh and in the resolution of Iraq's political crisis, the EU will seek to increase its presence in Erbil, in full respect of Iraq's constitutional order. Subject to the agreement of the central government and to budgetary constraints, an antenna of the EU Delegation to Iraq will be established in Erbil. The EU will seek to facilitate the flow of information between Baghdad and Erbil. As appropriate, it will also promote the involvement of the Government of the Kurdistan Region (KRG) in the implementation of the EU-Iraq PCA.
- The possibility of supporting Iraqi-driven diplomacy to reach out to countries in the region and beyond, building on the experience and know-how gained by Iraq in its international rehabilitation efforts between 2003 and 2010, should be examined.
- The EU Delegation in Iraq should be strengthened, inter alia with security experts from the Member States.

Technical assistance

- The EU can mobilise expertise available in the Member States to train and advise Iraqi state institutions in areas such as public administration reform, security sector reform, human rights compliant counter-terrorism measures, border security/Integrated Border Management (IBM), building on the provisions of the EU-Iraq PCA, and in particular the provisions on cooperation set out under Title III, which are applicable provisionally.

- In the security sector, EU support could help build Iraqi capacity to contain Da'esh. The use of EU instruments will be further explored accordingly. In order to avoid duplication of efforts, it is important, however, to recall Member States' existing engagement in providing military support to Iraq primarily through the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh and its working groups, as well as through NATO which is considering supporting the Iraqi Security Forces in the framework of the Defence Capacity Building Initiative. In order to facilitate the return of IDPs to territories retaken from Da'esh, technical assistance for de-mining operations and for the neutralisation of explosive devices planted by Da'esh could be made available.
- CT capacity building support (civilian aspects) will be provided, in harmony with the efforts of the Global Coalition and its working groups to encourage the Iraqi government to adopt a new, comprehensive approach to CT, based on respect for human rights and focused on prevention. Possible areas of support include: capacity building; intelligence gathering, analysis, sharing and protection; and the fight against financing of terrorism.
- EU efforts to foster institutional and legal reforms and the mainstreaming of human rights can build on the EU's ongoing *Development Cooperation Instrument* (DCI) project in support of Rule of Law, future support measures in the framework of the DCI Multi-annual Indicative Programming for 2014-2017, and lessons learnt from the EU JUSTLEX mission.
- Upon the request of the Iraqi government, and provided Member States can fund these operations, the EU can draw on a multitude of models within the EU and experts both at national and EU level (Committee of the Regions) in order to advise the Iraqi government on how to best implement devolution in practice.
- It will be important to reach out to the Iraqi Council of Representatives. The European Parliament and national parliaments are encouraged to play a prominent role.
- The EU will set out contingency plans for the delivery of quick support to the government of Iraq in its efforts to restore and boost basic services in areas liberated from Da'esh, in order to encourage the earliest possible voluntary, safe and dignified return of IDPs to their homes and with the provision that minimum protection guarantees are in place.

2.3.2 Support basic services, economic development and fight corruption

Stability in Iraq can only be sustainable if its huge wealth is harnessed for the benefit of all citizens. Weak public financial management in general and pervasive corruption have led to inefficient budget implementation and poor service delivery, as well as, in some areas, to the degradation of the environment and natural resources. As a consequence of the security crisis, the economy is shrinking and, in the wake of the declining oil price, public revenue and foreign reserves are decreasing. Prudent economic and fiscal policy reforms will be necessary to ensure the fiscal sustainability that is essential to meet the increased costs of social needs and security.

In terms of its "Doing Business" environment, for over a decade Iraq's performance has been far below the region's average with access to credit being one of the worst obstacles for private sector development. A determined fight against corruption and an improvement of Iraq's administrative capacity is required. The provision of basic social services (education, medicine) and infrastructure (electricity, transport) must also be improved urgently. The strengthening of the private sector and the promotion of an investment-friendly climate will be needed to ensure that economic progress is sustainable.

A major challenge for Iraq will be to link sustainable development with humanitarian aid, while mobilising the necessary resources to deliver basic services for displaced persons and facilitating the return and re-integration of IDPs. This implies the provision of basic services such as water, energy, housing, school education and higher education (Erasmus+ capacity building action newly available to Iraq), security, and access to finance (e.g., SME finance and microfinance), with due consideration given to the empowerment of women, and protection of natural resources.

Means of EU engagement:

Key aims of cooperation under the EU-Iraq PCA are macroeconomic stability, debt sustainability and public expenditure effectiveness. To this end the cooperation could accompany economic and business environment reforms, in particular within the sub-committees on trade and economic issues and on energy and transport. The parties could explore: a) macroeconomic developments b) general economic and fiscal policies (governance of natural resource revenue, scaling down subsidies and support to state-owned enterprises, investments into electricity distribution, promotion of renewable energy development and energy efficiency measures, increasing oil exports and facilitation of future gas exports - the EU-Iraq Energy Centre and related support measures of the EU and the Iraqi government are expected to contribute to that aim) c) financial sector development (deepening of the financial market, easing access to private credit, and increasing financial inclusion) and d) provision of information and technical expertise to help improve agricultural production. Cooperation to minimise the longer-term impact of the energy sector on the environment and climate change will also be envisaged.

Technical assistance can be offered through the DCI and other instruments to improve Public Finance Management (in the framework of a concerted engagement by the IMF, World Bank and EU) and through advice on economic reforms.

The 'Madad fund' and IcSP could provide seed money in the effort to link development with humanitarian assistance. Such linkages need to build on existing support and be widened as soon as possible to support conditions of protracted displacement and in preparation for the IDPs return to their homes, in order to lay the foundations for stability and sustainable economic growth.

Once a Framework Agreement is in place, the EIB – the EU Bank – can consider starting operations in Iraq with a main focus on supporting economic and social infrastructure development. The EIB could make available its technical expertise by providing upstream advisory services for the identification and preparation of key projects. It could further support such projects by providing financing, either through risk capital or through loans and blending. Building on its experience in post-conflict areas, the EIB could also investigate the possibility of setting up and managing dedicated trust-funds.

2.3.3 Support peace building, national reconciliation and transitional justice

Beyond political reforms, Iraq should be encouraged on a path of national reconciliation and cross sectarian dialogue with the objective of developing a sense of citizenship separate from sectarian and ethnic identity and promoting the richness of Iraq's cultural diversity. Iraqi civil society groups have a key role to play in peace-building, promoting Iraqi national identity, countering sectarian propaganda, protecting cultural heritage and diversity, as well as in advocacy on these key themes vis-à-vis the government.

On the question of justice and redress, the Iraqi government will need to make difficult choices, for example through a national 'truth and reconciliation' process that would have to be cross-sectarian and address crimes committed not just by Da'esh and members of the Sunni community but also by Shia militia and Iraqi security forces. Such a process may be essential to reinforce Iraqi citizenship.

There may be a need to provide international support for policing/peace-keeping operations in areas where communities remain in conflict with each other.

Means of EU engagement: Support for judicial and parliamentary bodies, as well as civil society organisations, in support of peace building and transitional justice activities should be considered under the EIDHR and/or the 'Madad fund'.

As serious war crimes and human rights violations have been committed, addressing these will be important for reconciliation. The EU should support the efforts of public bodies, NGOs and the ICC in this context.

3 – ASSUMPTIONS, TIMEFRAME AND REVIEW

The EU's ability to deliver on the objectives and actions set out above will be heavily dependent on the evolving situation on the ground, including the fight against Da'esh as well as the willingness of national and regional players to act in accordance with the stated objectives.

Ideally Da'esh and other terrorist groups should be defeated in both Iraq and Syria, and the countries' political problems solved concurrently. The fulfilment of all objectives in either Syria or Iraq alone without matching progress in the other country could jeopardise lasting stability and economic development in the region.

The present framework has a multiannual horizon. To remain relevant, it will require a high degree of flexibility to adapt to developments on the ground. It is proposed to establish an annual review process in order to assess the impact of the EU's policies. This should include a review of the perception of the EU's policies amongst its primary beneficiaries in Syria, Iraq and the wider region, in order to ensure the necessary, continued buy-in of the local population to the EU's engagement.

The EU needs to ensure that it communicates its strategic engagement in the most effective way, both to the EU citizens', in view of the impact of the crises in Syria and Iraq on the EU and the financial commitments being made, and to the local population in those countries and the wider region.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT**1. FRAMEWORK OF THE PROPOSAL/INITIATIVE****1.1. Title of the proposal/initiative**

Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy: “Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat”

1.2. Policy area(s) concerned in the ABM/ABB structure⁶

Heading 4 – Global Europe
 TITLE 19 — FOREIGN POLICY INSTRUMENTS
 TITLE 21 — DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION
 TITLE 22 — ENLARGEMENT
 TITLE 23 — HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION

1.3. Nature of the proposal/initiative

- The proposal/initiative relates to **a new action**
- The proposal/initiative relates to **a new action following a pilot project/preparatory action⁷**
- The proposal/initiative relates to **the extension of an existing action**
- The proposal/initiative relates to **an action redirected towards a new action**

1.4. Objective(s)**1.4.1. *The Commission's multiannual strategic objective(s) targeted by the proposal/initiative***

Global Europe: A stronger global actor

The Middle-East is currently experiencing a profound crisis. The conflicts in Syria and Iraq are both a reflection and a driver of this crisis, with the growing potential to destabilise neighbouring countries (including the EU candidate country Turkey) and the wider region. These crises have created a humanitarian disaster affecting more than 13.5 million people forced to flee their homes, and more than 17 million people in need of humanitarian aid (12.2 in Syria and 5.2 in Iraq).

Following more than four years of brutal conflict in Syria, Da'esh's declared endeavour to act as an alternative, ideologically radical state has proven appealing to extremists in the region and beyond, particularly in areas in Syria and Iraq where

⁶ ABM: activity-based management; ABB: activity-based budgeting.

⁷ As referred to in Article 54(2)(a) or (b) of the Financial Regulation.

state authority has collapsed and where a feeling of political and socio-economic marginalisation prevailed.

As an important actor in the region, the EU has a responsibility to ensure that it uses its influence and its numerous instruments effectively and coherently to defend human lives, human dignity and rights, and help resolve these crises, in close coordination with regional and international partners. In addition, there are compelling reasons of self-interest for the EU to increase its engagement in Syria, Iraq and the neighbouring countries.

1.4.2. *Specific objective(s) and ABM/ABB activity(ies) concerned*

ABM/ABB activity (ies) concerned:

19.02 - Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace - Crisis response, conflict prevention, peace-building and crisis preparedness

21.02 – Development Cooperation Instrument

21.03 - European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)

21.04 – EIDHR

22.02 - Enlargement process and strategy

23.02 - Humanitarian aid, food aid and disaster preparedness

Specific objectives relating to the ABM activity – 19.02

In a situation of crisis or emerging crisis, to contribute swiftly to stability by providing an effective response designed to help, establish or re-establish the conditions essential to the proper implementation of the Union's external policies and actions in accordance with Article 31 TUE.

Specific objectives relating to the ABM activity - 21.02

Fostering the sustainable and inclusive development in partner countries and regions and the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights, as foreseen in the TEU, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty.

Specific objectives relating to the ABM activity - 21.03

Promoting confidence building and other measures contributing to security and the prevention and settlement of conflicts.

Specific objective relating to the ABM activity – 21.04

Enhancing the respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Specific objective relating to the ABM activity – 22.02

Support for economic, social and territorial development

Specific objectives relating to the ABM activity – 23.02

Provide life-saving humanitarian aid and international protection

All those instruments shall provide actions in support of the objectives as set out in the Communication as regards:

Objectives common to Syria, Iraq and other affected countries

1. Promote regional engagement in support of security and long-term peace
2. Isolate and defeat Da'esh as a military force and as a terrorist organisation and counter its ideological influence
3. Prevent regional spill-overs and enhance border security
4. Provide life-saving humanitarian aid and international protection
5. Strengthen local resilience capacities in Syria, Iraq and the affected neighbouring countries

In Syria:

1. Work toward a political transition
2. Strengthen the moderate opposition and civil society actors
3. Provide basic services and contribute to rebuilding an administration in areas of reduced violence
4. Promote human rights / international humanitarian law and ensure accountability
5. Prepare for the 'day after'

In Iraq:

1. Support the Iraqi government in making inclusiveness a reality
2. Support basic services, economic development and fight corruption
3. Support peace building, national reconciliation and transitional justice

1.5. Grounds for the proposal/initiative

1.5.1. Requirement(s) to be met in the short or long term

The EU must secure sustainable and predictable funding commensurate to the unprecedented level of needs in the region.

1.5.2. Added value of EU involvement

The EU is already at the forefront of international efforts in support of the people of Syria in particular. The proposed strategy will draw on and complement the *EU counter-terrorism/foreign fighters strategy* and the Joint Communication: *Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis*

1.5.3. Lessons learned from similar experiences in the past

Several instruments shall be used to tackle the crisis from different angles and to avoid spill over effects to neighbouring countries, along the lines of the Joint Communication: *Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis*. Effective coordination of the response is essential.

1.5.4. Compatibility and possible synergy with other appropriate instruments

The proposal considers a combination of different instruments. Activities are mutually reinforcing and therefore must to be carried out broadly in parallel.

1.6. Duration and financial impact

Proposal/initiative of **limited duration**

- Proposal/initiative in effect in 2015 and 2016
- Financial impact in 2015 and 2016

1.7. Management mode(s) planned⁸

Direct management by the Commission

- by its departments, including by its staff in the Union delegations;
- by the executive agencies

Indirect management by entrusting budget implementation tasks to:

- third countries or the bodies they have designated;
- international organisations and their agencies (to be specified);
- the EIB and the European Investment Fund;
- bodies referred to in Articles 208 and 209 of the Financial Regulation;
- public law bodies;

⁸ Details of management modes and references to the Financial Regulation may be found on the BudgWeb site: http://www.cc.cec/budg/man/budgmanag/budgmanag_en.html

- bodies governed by private law with a public service mission to the extent that they provide adequate financial guarantees;
- bodies governed by the private law of a Member State that are entrusted with the implementation of a public-private partnership and that provide adequate financial guarantees;
- persons entrusted with the implementation of specific actions in the CFSP pursuant to Title V of the TEU, and identified in the relevant basic act.
- *If more than one management mode is indicated, please provide details in the 'Comments' section.*

Comments

Management modes will be decided according to the stipulations of the relevant instruments through the respective Financing Decisions.

2. MANAGEMENT MEASURES

2.1. Monitoring and reporting rules

Specify frequency and conditions.

The monitoring and reporting rules as laid down in the relevant legal bases will be applied.

2.2. Management and control system

2.2.1. Risk(s) identified

- 1) The lack of political and administrative stability in partner countries may lead to difficulties in designing programmes, delays in disbursing funds and loss of effectiveness;
- 2) The lack of circulation of information may hamper the resolution of problematic issues related to aid management.

2.2.2. Information concerning the internal control system set up

The control methods envisaged comply with the internal control standards of the Commission as set out in the Management Plans of the relevant services.

In the area of humanitarian aid, there is an effective control system based on the use of external experts undertaking ex-ante assessments of projects and monitoring, as well as evaluations. The humanitarian projects are subject to external audit.

2.3. Measures to prevent fraud and irregularities

Specify existing or envisaged prevention and protection measures.

The protection of the European Union's financial interests and the fight against fraud and irregularities form an integral part of the relevant legal bases. Administrative monitoring of contracts and payments will be the responsibility of the relevant Authorising Officer, whereas for humanitarian aid the responsibility lies with the Headquarters assisted by the ECHO experts in the field. Particular attention will be paid to the nature of expenditure (eligibility of expenditure), to respect for budgets (actual expenditure) and to verify supporting information and relevant documentation (evidence of expenditure).

3. ESTIMATED FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSAL/INITIATIVE

3.1. Heading(s) of the multiannual financial framework and expenditure budget line(s) affected

- Existing budget lines

In order of multiannual financial framework headings and budget lines.

Heading of multiannual financial framework	Budget line	Type of expenditure	Contribution			
	Number [Heading.....]	Diff./Non-diff. ⁹	from EFTA countries ¹⁰	from candidate countries ¹¹	from third countries	within the meaning of Article 21(2)(b) of the Financial Regulation
4	23.02.01 HUMA- Humanitarian aid	Diff./Non-diff.	NO	NO	NO	NO

3.2. Estimated impact on expenditure

⁹ Diff. = Differentiated appropriations / Non-diff. = Non-differentiated appropriations.

¹⁰ EFTA: European Free Trade Association.

¹¹ Candidate countries and, where applicable, potential candidate countries from the Western Balkans.

3.2.1. Summary of estimated impact on expenditure

EUR million (to three decimal places)

Heading of multiannual financial framework	Number	Heading 4, Global Europe
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DG: ECHO			Year	Year	Year	Year	Enter as many years as necessary to show the duration of the impact (see point 1.6)			TOTAL
			N¹²	N+1	N+2	N+3				
• Operational appropriations										
23.02.01 Delivery of rapid, effective and needs-based humanitarian aid	Commitments	(1)	50							50
	Payments	(2)	50							50
	Payments	(2a)								
Appropriations of an administrative nature financed from the envelope of specific programmes ¹³			N/A							
TOTAL appropriations for DG ECHO	Commitments	=1+1a +3	50							50
	Payments	=2+2a +3	50							50

¹² Year N is the year in which implementation of the proposal/initiative starts.

¹³ Technical and/or administrative assistance and expenditure in support of the implementation of EU programmes and/or actions (former 'BA' lines), indirect research, direct research.

• TOTAL operational appropriations	Commitments	(4)	50							50
	Payments	(5)	50							50
• TOTAL appropriations of an administrative nature financed from the envelope for specific programmes		(6)	N/A							
TOTAL appropriations under HEADING 4 of the multiannual financial framework	Commitments	=4+ 6	50							50
	Payments	=5+ 6	50							50

3.2.2. *Estimated impact on appropriations of an administrative nature*

3.2.1.1. Summary

- The proposal/initiative does not require the use of appropriations of an administrative nature

3.2.1.2. Estimated requirements of human resources

- The proposal/initiative does not require any additional human resources.

3.2.3. *Compatibility with the current multiannual financial framework*

- The proposal/initiative is compatible with the current multiannual financial framework.
- The proposal/initiative will entail reprogramming of the relevant heading in the multiannual financial framework.

The additional funding for the activities identified in this statement will be totally financed through redeployment and reprogramming of the envelopes of the external relations instruments which are part of Heading 4 of the Multi-annual financial framework. The Commission will propose a transfer from the Emergency Aid Reserve to Humanitarian Aid in 2015, and any reallocation of commitments needed in 2016 will be settled in the framework of the 2016 budgetary procedure.

The sources of funding are described in the table below.

Package for the crisis in Syria and neighbouring countries over 2 years (2015-2016)

(Commitment appropriations)

DG	Financial Instruments H4	2015 EUR million	2016 EUR million	2015-2016 EUR million
ECHO	HUMA - HIP Syria Iraq	200	200	400
NEAR	ENI – Syria crisis	72	72	144
	IPA - Turkey	78	78	156
DEVCO	DCI	50	50	100
FPI	IcSP	35	35	70
DEVCO	EIDHR	7	8	15
ECFIN	Loan Guarantee*		65	65
EAR	Emergency Aid Reserve*	50		50
Total		492	508	1,000

* These appropriations will be proposed for transfer (in 2015) or reallocation (in the 2016 Draft Budget) to the relevant instruments for implementation.

3.2.4. Third-party contributions

- The proposal/initiative does not provide for co-financing by third parties.

3.3. Estimated impact on revenue

- X The proposal/initiative has no financial impact on revenue.