

Norway to Provide NOK 2.3 Billion to Alleviate Syria Crisis

We are following up our pledges from the London conference in 2016 and giving substantial support to civilians affected by this horrific conflict," said Minister of Foreign Affairs Børge Brende. This year, Norway will provide at least NOK 2,3 billion in aid to Syria and the neighboring countries. Norway's contribution will be announced at the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, which is being held at ministerial level today. Norway is co-chairing the conference with the EU, the UN, the UK, Germany, Kuwait and Qatar.

Over 70 countries and a number of UN organisations and NGOs are taking part. "The Syria crisis is now in its seventh year, and it is vital that the international community maintains its focus on this massive crisis. The conference in Brussels aims to secure sustained international engagement and support for the humanitarian efforts and the UN-led process to find political solutions.

The support is particularly important for Syria's neighbouring countries, which have received over five million refugees. The refugee crisis is putting an immense strain on these societies, and the international community must step up its efforts in the host countries as well as inside Syria," said Mr. Brende. At the donor conference in London last year, which was held on Norway's initiative, Norway announced a contribution of NOK 10 billion over a four-year period.

By the end of this year, Norway will have disbursed half of this amount. Norway is urging other donors to give more. "At least 15 % of the aid from Norway will go to education initiatives. Investing in education is crucial for the younger generation in Syria. In the time ahead, Norway will also give priority to humanitarian protection and assistance to displaced women and girls. We will intensify our efforts in the field of health, especially relating to reproductive health," said Mr. Brende. Norway attaches importance to taking a long-term approach to aid, and is also providing various forms of development aid, for example through the World Bank. "It is not enough that people merely survive, they must also have something to live for in the future.

That is why we are increasing our support for clearing mines and explosive devices, which ISIL has used extensively. In many areas, humanitarian efforts cannot begin – and civilians cannot return to their homes – until mines and improvised explosives have been cleared," said Mr. Brende. Norway will continue to support projects that enable civil society groups and women's groups from both sides of the conflict to meet and discuss solutions to the conflict.

Norway is providing political and financial support for the work of UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura in connection with the Geneva negotiations. Norway is a member

of the global coalition to counter ISIL, and is contributing in both civilian and military terms. Norway will also support the new UN panel that is to assist in investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria.