



NEW HUMANITY



World Council  
of Churches

46th session Human Rights Council

Item 3: General Debate

9 March 2021

Madam President,

The Syrian population continues to bear the brunt of the Syria crisis that will be marked by a grim milestone of ten years in a few days. Over the past year, the COVID 19 pandemic coupled with the socio-economic collapse have sharply increased the population's needs.

In addition, the complexity and the impact of unilateral coercive measures imposed on Syria have exacerbated the situation by seriously hampering the ability of NGOs and Church-based organisations to deliver essential aid and to contribute to a just recovery.

While recognizing that all parties to the conflict bear responsibility for the suffering of the Syrian population, the sanctions imposed on Syria is a question of human dignity because they affect the whole Syrian population by limiting their access to basic needs and services.

Importing certain humanitarian items is becoming increasingly challenging. Increased levels of bank de-risking often prevent NGOs and local Church-based organisation from receiving funds allocated for their humanitarian aid and to their early recovery programmes, despite humanitarian exemptions. This often results in the delay of programming and suspension of life-saving activities.

It is a legal and moral imperative to allow aid to reach those in need without delay or impediment, especially in the current COVID-19 pandemic, and to alleviate the social and economic impact on civilian populations. We therefore call on the United States government and on the European Union to:

- Remove those sanctions that prevent the Syrian population from accessing basic needs and services, essential health supplies, including access to COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, and that inhibit the reconstruction of basic infrastructure destroyed by the ongoing conflict;

- Urgently address the unintended implications of sanctions and other restrictive measures hindering effective access to the population and delivery of aid by putting in place effective and transparent humanitarian exceptions;
- Address bank over-compliance challenges by assisting NGOs to build trustful relationship with the banking system and by exploring the possibility of creating a dedicated mechanism to swiftly transfer funds for a just and dignified economic and social recovery.

Thank you Madam President