



## **UCLG Middle East working group**

within UCLG's City Diplomacy and Decentralized Cooperation Committee

### **International local government delegation puts 'Syrian border municipalities' recommendations to UCLG Executive Committee**

A terrible humanitarian disaster is taking place in Syria. It is estimated that the conflict has cost 100.000 lives since it started two years ago. Over 4 million people have fled their houses. Many of these refugees are being hosted in the neighbouring countries Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. The scale of the human tragedy is immense. Border municipalities are under enormous strain.

In March, an international delegation of elected officials from French, Turkish, and Dutch local governments and experts from the national associations of local governments of Canada, The Netherlands, Turkey and France and representatives of the UCLG Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA) visited border municipalities coping with the flow of displaced Syrians in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. The initiative for this mission, which took place under the auspices of the Middle East Working Group, was taken by UCLG president.

The delegation met local, regional and central government officials, non- government organization (NGO) representatives as well as representatives of the Syrian community. Aside from expressing solidarity on behalf of the world community of local government, the team surveyed how local governments in the three countries bordering with Syria are coping with the influx of Syrian refugees.

The delegation found that the displaced Syrian people situation has put host municipalities and towns and cities adjacent to camps in the three countries under considerable pressure, particularly in Lebanon and Jordan. In some cases, the displaced population has doubled the size of the community and the impact has been felt on all basic services, in particular, water, sanitation, waste disposal, healthcare and education. The important work of the United Nations and non-government agencies can not and should not replace local government authority responsibilities but support to local governments is critical if social stability is to be maintained. Therefore, the delegation has sent the following main recommendations to the UCLG Executive Bureau, on June 5 and 6:

**It is therefore recommended that UCLG and the international local government community show solidarity with, and provide urgent support to the affected local governments in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon and Syria by:**

- Making every effort to bring the gravity of the humanitarian situation to the attention of world leaders (the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the European Union, national and local governments, the non-government community and also the private sector) and advocate for an end to the conflict.
- Calling on members to redirect resources to assist affected local authorities and host communities with their needs through decentralized cooperation / MIC including:
  - Financial / budget support
  - Technical support: managing and delivering basic services such as water and sanitation, waste management, education and health care; creating communications and outreach strategies; and partnership development and coordination
  - Material support: provision of water pumps, ambulances, fire trucks, garbage trucks and containers, transport vehicles, electricity production materials.
- Specifically, calling on the membership of UCLG to contribute financially to a Local Authorities Emergency Support Fund which is to be managed by a consortium of VNG International, FCM, CUF<sup>1</sup>, UCLG-MEWA and Union of Municipalities of Turkey and which will serve to finance concrete projects (based on the needs described above) to improve the conditions of the inhabitants of local authorities which have been affected by the conflict.
- Prioritising support for Lebanon and Jordan, more specifically, Kab Elias and surrounding municipalities (Bekaa Valley, Lebanon) and the Al Za'Atari and Azraq camps (Mafraq, Jordan) and supporting calls for financial support to these programs which the collaborating organisations will make to third parties, notably to governments and multilateral institutions.
- Supporting the Union of Municipalities of Turkey to further build their capacity to support member municipalities affected by natural and man-made disasters (10 since 2004).
- Promoting more cooperation between Lebanese Authorities and UN agencies and NGO.
- Maintaining / establishing contact with Syrian municipalities who will need help with reconstruction and, in the longer term, with developing a democratic local government system.

**At the same time, with a view to faster and better coordination of future support to disaster torn local government, it is recommended that UCLG**

- Continues to encourage its members to collaborate on developing and funding local government oriented post disaster relief and reconstruction programs.
- Calls for the establishment of a (UCLG) “Rapid Response Protocol” to improve and guide support to local governments affected by future natural and man-made disasters ensuring support and input from all regional section of UCLG, and,
- Mandate the Development Cooperation and City Diplomacy Committee and its working groups to investigate the feasibility of a Local Government Disaster Preparedness and Response Centre, striving to help local government to minimize the consequences of

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<sup>1</sup> VNG International, FCM and CUF took part in the mission and also work together in a joint programme for the reconstruction of municipalities in Haiti

disaster and to optimize the conditions for post disaster response and recovery, and to report back to the Executive Bureau specifying the feasibility and mandate.

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