

Over 85 countries, organizations to attend Brussels meeting on Syria - EU

BRUSSELS, April 22 (KUNA) — The European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) will co-chair the second Brussels conference on ‘Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region’, on April 24-25, the bloc announced Sunday. The conference will bring together participants from more than 85 countries and organisations at ministerial level to discuss all key aspects of the Syria crisis, including political, humanitarian and regional dimensions, according to information issued by the EU.

The conference will seek to maintain international engagement in delivering assistance to the Syrian people and host communities, in addition to providing an opportunity to discuss the political situation in the war-torn nation on a global level, it added.

The first day of the conference (April 24) will bring together around 200 NGOs from Syria and the region for dialogue with UN agencies, ministers of refugee-hosting countries and international donors, it pointed out.

In light of the latest developments in Syria, the EU reaffirms that only a political solution will ensure lasting stability in the country, through the efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria as well as the UN-led process to achieve an intra-Syrian political solution.

Meanwhile, the ministerial sessions on Wednesday will cover all key aspects of the conflict, which include political and humanitarian factors, in addition to economic recovery for the region.

According to EU sources, the foreign ministers of Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Jordan and the Prime Minister of Lebanon are due to attend the conference, while it remains to be seen if Iran and Russia will participate in any capacity.

The Gulf Cooperation Council, Islamic Development Bank, Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, along with the United Nations Relief and

Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are also expected to be present.

The first Brussels Conference last year produced a sum USD 6 billion in humanitarian and development aid to Syria and the region, while donors pledged a sum of USD 3.7 billion for the years 2018-20, in addition to USD 30 billion in loans.

According to the EU, USD 7.5 billion in grants was contributed by donors for Syria and neighboring countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt) in 2017, exceeding by 26% the original pledge of USD 6 billion, while a total of USD 2.4 billion was contributed as of March 2018. Out of the USD 30 billion worth of loans pledged for the period 2016-2020, more than half (57% or USD 17.2 billion) have been contributed so far. The Brussels conferences on Syria and the region follows similar initiatives such as the London Conference of February 2016, which was held under the leadership of the United Kingdom, Germany, Kuwait, Norway and the UN. International donors pledged significant financial aid for Syria, as well as civilian stabilization measures to strengthen resilience in host communities, building on the commitments made at the three previous pledging conferences in Kuwait from 2013-15, the EU information added.

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