



Security Council

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Letter dated 15 August 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to the letter dated 13 July 2023 addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations ([S/2023/526](#)), please find enclosed an ensuing exchange of letters, respectively dated 5 and 6 August 2023, between the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (see annex I) and the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic (see annex II).

I would be grateful if you could bring the present letter and its annexes to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) António **Guterres**



Annex I**Letter dated 5 August 2023 from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator addressed to the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations**

Thank you for your letter dated 13 July 2023 to the Secretary-General (S/2023/526), in which the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic granted the United Nations permission to use the Bab al-Hawa crossing to deliver humanitarian assistance to the north-west of the country, for a period of six months, starting on 13 July 2023. This permission forms a basis for the United Nations to lawfully conduct cross-border humanitarian operations through the Bab al-Hawa crossing. Some of the most vulnerable populations in the Syrian Arab Republic are in the north-west, where 4.1 million people need humanitarian aid.

Following our meeting on 17 July, I wish to clarify some of the essential operational modalities highlighted during the Security Council meeting held on the same day.

The United Nations' humanitarian operations throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, including in the north-west, remain guided by the core principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. These principles underpin our operational planning, programmes and partnerships, as captured in the humanitarian response plan, including early recovery projects and livelihood programming. In putting these principles into practice, the United Nations carries out independent assessments to identify beneficiaries to receive aid based on needs alone.

Similarly, these principles guide the careful selection processes to identify partners prior to their inclusion in our humanitarian response plan. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs will continue to appeal to donors to provide the necessary funding for the humanitarian response plan. Cooperation and coordination with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate cross-border assistance can be undertaken in a manner consistent with the core principles and current structure and practice that comprise the United Nations' humanitarian response in the country.

The United Nations also maintains stringent, independent and robust oversight arrangements, including at all permitted border crossings, to ensure that aid is distributed as intended. These arrangements can be reviewed or enhanced through the involvement of others, in close coordination between the relevant sides. A version of the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism should operate to monitor United Nations humanitarian assistance prior to its entry into the Syrian Arab Republic.

While the United Nations values our partnerships with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the supervision and facilitation of our operations in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic (as in other emergencies worldwide) rests within the mandate of the Emergency Relief Coordinator as established in General Assembly resolution 46/182. Furthermore, we understand that neither organization, at this time, has a presence in the area that may allow for such responsibilities. The possibility of their involvement in this process may be explored when circumstances permit, in a manner consistent with the aforementioned resolution.

The United Nations recognizes the legitimacy of any State to take necessary steps to address terrorism, and acts in full respect for its sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. Within this framework, the United Nations and its

partners may need to engage with different actors in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian operations which do their utmost to guarantee that aid reaches Syrian civilians. A principled and pragmatic approach for this engagement can allow our respective prerogatives to coexist.

The United Nations' ability to use Bab al-Hawa crossing, alongside Bab al-Salam and Ra'i crossings, and crossline modalities will allow the United Nations to continue to do its utmost to support humanitarian efforts in line with the humanitarian response plan (humanitarian assistance, protection, resilience) to stand with the people in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic and carry out its humanitarian operations in a manner consistent with the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the country.

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify some of our principled operational modalities, and I look forward to continuing this exchange in the days ahead.

(Signed) Martin **Griffiths**
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Annex II**Letter dated 6 August 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator**

[Original: Arabic]

I received your letter of 5 August 2023 and would like to thank you for the clarifications on some of the essential operational modalities. I would also like to assure you once again that the Syrian Arab Republic is committed to continuing working with you to deliver humanitarian aid to all civilians in need in all parts of the Syrian Arab Republic, with full respect for its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, in a manner that helps improve the humanitarian and living conditions of Syrians and provides them with basic services, without discrimination, including through the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure and service facilities.

Accordingly, the Syrian Government has granted the United Nations permission to use Bab al-Hawa border crossing to deliver humanitarian aid to north-west Syria for a period of six months, starting from 13 July 2023. I would also like to inform you that the Syrian Government has agreed to extend the emergency measures taken after the earthquake, including the authorization granted to the United Nations to use Bab al-Salam and al-Ra'i crossings, for an additional three months, expiring on 13 November 2023 (the subject of your note verbale No. 91 dated 1 August 2023). In addition, an open approval has been granted for the Sarmada and Saraqib crossings to be used for humanitarian consignments, within and across lines, to north-west Syria for a period of six months expiring on 1 February 2024. All those humanitarian crossings will provide the United Nations with the necessary flexibility and sufficient capacity to deliver humanitarian aid to those who need it in north-western Syria.

Syria is pleased that your letter states that United Nations operations in Syria are guided by the principles of humanitarian action established in General Assembly resolution 46/182; that you support early recovery projects and livelihood programming, which would improve the humanitarian conditions of Syrians, revitalize the economy, promote development; and that you support the dignified, voluntary and safe return of the displaced and refugees to their areas of origin.

Syria appreciates the statement in your letter to the effect that you will continue to appeal to international donors to provide the necessary funding for those humanitarian activities. It also notes that the United Nations wishes to maintain stringent and independent monitoring arrangements for aid consignments at the borders. It is cognizant of the importance of that practice in order to ensure that the aid is humanitarian in nature.

Syria looks forward to the involvement of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in the ongoing humanitarian operations in north-west Syria, in cooperation with the United Nations, when circumstances permit. It will continue to coordinate with the United Nations for that purpose. It stresses that the United Nations must do its utmost to ensure that cross-border humanitarian aid into north-west Syria reaches Syrian civilians.

(Signed) **Bassam Sabbagh**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative