



Minutes of NATIONAL INTER-AGENCY MEETING

20 May 2022, 10:00-12:00

Remotely on Zoom

Chairperson(s)	Ola Boutros – LCRP General Supervisor, MoSA Elina Silen – Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator, UNDP Camilla Jelbart – Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator, UNHCR
Minutes prepared by	Hiba Ramadan – Senior Inter-Agency Assistant, UNHCR
Agenda of the Meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Brussels Conference Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inputs from GoL & NGO delegates, financial pledges 2) Onward Movements: context and coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National ○ North Lebanon 3) LCRP Business Continuity Plan Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impact of the Ukraine Situation: Lebanon Analysis ○ Post-elections context and impact on tensions ○ Amendments to the BCP 4) AOB

Proceedings

Opening – Ola Boutros, LCRP General Supervisor, Ministry of Social Affairs

- The Lebanese delegation at the conference spoke on the continuing deteriorating situation in Lebanon and the Lebanese government's inability to continue to bear the consequences and requested the international community to work on a durable solution to assist Lebanon through increased funding, as well as to support the safe return of displaced Syrians. In regards to Food Security, Lebanon imports more than 86% of its wheat from Ukraine and Russia which leads to threats on social stability and more struggle on people's lives. A pledge of 25 million euros was made by the EU to provide provisional support.
- The World Bank has approved the emergency concessional loan to Lebanon for an addition 150 million euros. The agreement between the World Bank and the Ministry of the Economy and Trade needs to be approved by the cabinet in the parliament in a matter of 2 months.
- The Steering Committee will take place on the 31st of May, including to discuss the update of the 251 most vulnerable cadasters, used to underpin geographical targeting under the LCRP. An update of the 251 cadasters will make use of more timely data against : (1) multi-deprivation index and (2) the number of refugees displaced in each region.
- LCRP 2022 launch is scheduled for the 20 June 2022.

1. Brussels Conference Update

- The international community confirmed close to EUR 4.1 billion / USD 4.3 billion in funding to support humanitarian, resilience and development activities in 2022 for the Syria crisis response, which includes pledges towards the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), and the ICRC Syria Crisis appeals.
- This includes some re-confirmed pledges for multi-year funding previously announced.



Inputs from Regional Bureau (as presented by Alex Tyler, Senior Liaison Advisor, Middle East and North Africa Bureau, UNHCR)

- There was a concern that the Ukraine Situation will overshadow the ability to meet needs related to the Syria crisis.
- Overall, it appears that the annual pledge for 2022 is similar to 2021 (4.4b). When combining annual with multi-year pledges, pledging was slightly higher (6.7 B USD vs 6.4 B USD).
- Pledges are usually lower than the total funds received each year (some countries under-pledge or can only pledge what their parliaments have approved up to that point). They also do not represent 'new' money – rather they represent the minimum level of money planned for the year.
- There was resounding support for an expansion of humanitarian activities inside Syria to include Early Recovery. Building on the Core Donors Group and Senior Officials Meeting (2022), the endorsement of early recovery activities represented a significant shift in donor policy and is an important step towards improving conditions inside Syria.
- Support to early recovery does signal a possible, if slow and incremental, way forward in terms of solutions – the pace of which stands in contrast to host countries' much more urgent calls for return.

Inputs from NGOs (as presented by Alejandra Acebo Crespo, LHDF Advocacy Adviser)

- See PPT for more details
- *Key recommendations from CSOs:*
 - Amplify and empower Syrian voices, within Syria and abroad
 - Advance the localization agenda as key towards improved service delivery, within Syria and the region
 - Ensure protection of refugees, including access to legal residency and civil documentation, and access to basic human rights including health and education
 - Work towards enabling legal frameworks, allowing for refugee's self-reliance
 - Promote durable solutions, including resettlement and other legal and safe pathways

Discussion

[Elias Sadkni, House of Peace]

- Significant effort was put into the recommendations developed by the CSOs, but only 5 minutes was provided to share them in the opening session on the first day.
- Three panels took place (1) on youth (2) on Syrian voices (3) on food security with poor representation for Syrians and youth: this was considered not helpful after 11 years of the crisis.
- There is a need to make sure that the consultations that took place in Lebanon are properly communicated with those who are designing the interventions and setting plans for response implementation and disbursement of funds in Lebanon.
- Side conversations took place with the EU delegation and a meeting with the US Ambassador.



[Senior Liaison Advisor, Middle East and North Africa Bureau, UNHCR]

- There is limited space to participate during the conference, yet the 'dialogue' itself is the process that is conducted ahead of time, so all the advocacy conducted by the NGOs can have an impact in Lebanon and with donor countries.

2. Onward Movements: Context and Coordination

- National Update (as presented by Tracey Maulfair, Deputy Representative (Protection), UNHCR)
- UNHCR Lebanon first recorded a significant spike in irregular onward movement by sea in 2020 compared to previous years, with more than 794 passengers embarking or attempting to embark on journeys toward Cyprus and other destinations by sea (270 passengers in 2019).
- This upward trend has continued in 2021, where irregular boat departures have doubled as compared to 2020, with at least 1,570 individuals known to have departed or attempted to depart as part of 38 recorded boat movements.
- The majority of boats have either been rescued or intercepted at sea by Lebanese authorities or returned by Cyprus to Lebanon.
- In April, 5 boats were reported, with 2 boats intending to reach Cyprus and 3 to reach Italy. Two of the Italy-bound boats successfully arrived and disembarked in the Calabria region carrying a combined total of 405 passengers.
- The majority of boat passengers have been Syrian (59% in 2020, 72% in 2021 and 72% in 2022 so far). The ratio of Lebanese passengers has been in the range of 12 to 18% in the past three years – in 2022 to date, 13% of passengers in all recorded boat movements have been Lebanese.
- The poverty caused by Lebanon's rapidly deteriorating socio-economic situation is a leading factor contributing to people seeking to move onwards irregularly.
- While the desire to move onwards is likely to increase, this is likely to be mitigated by a number of factors including people's ability to pay for smuggling fees or air travel. Onward movement requires considerable outlays for travel, often involving significant amounts paid up front and ahead of the journey or after it to individuals and networks facilitating such travel, such as those represented by individual intermediaries, travel agencies or covert smuggling networks.
- This significantly limits the ability of many Syrians and Lebanese to undertake concrete steps to initiate the travel due to their limited financial capabilities.
- So far in 2022, the number of boat passengers are the highest they've been in the period from Jan – April since tracking was started in 2018.
- The total number of passengers for 2022 reflects a 212% increase on the numbers of passengers taking such movements during the same period (January – April) last year.
- As of today, in 2022 UNHCR is aware of 8 boats with 597 passengers departing or attempting to depart irregularly by sea from Lebanon.
- Since April, UNHCR has noted an increase in the number of families with children undertaking the journeys.



IOM and UNHCR Response to Onward Movements:

- IOM has a Rapid Response Team that provides disembarkation assistance at Beirut Port (medical assistance, food, clothes, blankets).
- UNHCR's protection follow-up is done through detention monitoring, legal aid and advocacy interventions, case management services through partners.
- Data collection on migration drivers, routes, number of movements and missing persons
- Coordination (Meetings on Onward Movements; new taskforce established in the North, co-led by UNHCR and IOM)
- UNHCR CwC campaign on the risks of irregular onward movements, focusing on key protection issues affecting all passengers Assisted voluntary return and reintegration of Lebanese irregular migrants stranded/detained abroad
- Small-scale prevention work in migration prone areas in the North (livelihoods support)
- Advocacy

Regional Coordination – North Lebanon *(as presented by Jorunn Brandvoll, Senior Protection Officer, Tripoli Office, UNHCR)*

- UNHCR and IOM are co-leading the coordination group for onward movement, established in 2020 after the first incident occurred.
- MoSA has requested to establish coordination across local NGOs that are contributing to this response, along with the municipality in Tripoli.
- IOM and UNHCR started identifying onward movement in 2018 where there were few onward movements entirely composed of Syrians. More recently, identified passengers are from different nationalities including Lebanese, Palestinian refugees, and migrants.
- Many refugees are also trying to travel to other countries by land and air. These incidents are also being followed by UNHCR and IOM.
- The tragic incident that recently took place raised a lot of attention and tension given the number of Lebanese passengers.
- The Tripoli municipality, with a group of NGOs and UNICEF, was directly activated to respond. UNHCR and IOM have closely collaborated with MoSA on following up on the individuals involved. NRC and IOM conducted the assessment for Lebanese nationals and UNHCR has followed up with Syrian refugees while UNRWA followed up with the one Palestinian refugee that was involved.
- 82 individuals were on this boat, among them 23 Syrians, 6 Palestinians and the rest were assumed to be Lebanese nationals. 43 survived and the remaining are dead or missing.
- Assistance has been provided and is still being provided as it has taken some time to access most of the families affected due to the trauma that they experienced. Cash assistance has been distributed to the most vulnerable families. Each case is being referred to its needed services like case management, shelter, etc.

3. Update on LCRP Business Continuity Plan *(as presented by Camilla Jelbart Mosse, Senior Inter-Agency Coordination Officer)*

- The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) analyses the risks currently impacting the LCRP's operations, developed in 2021 through in-depth partner consultations at the regional level, ensuring Sector coordinators at the national level are fully engaged.



- Core preparedness measures have been included at the national and sub-national level. Regions were asked to further prioritize measures to be taken in their regions, with feedback to the inter-sector working groups.
- With ongoing dynamic shifts affecting Lebanon, the Inter-Sector is planning to update the BCP to incorporate analysis related to the Ukraine situation and the dynamics after the Lebanese elections. This meeting will focus on analysis of the risks related to the operating environment for LCRP partners, ahead of the publication of the BCP.

A) Impact of the Ukraine Situation: Lebanon Analysis *(as presented by Abdallah Souhani, VAM Officer - Food Security/Market Analyst – RAM Unit, WFP)*

- See PPT for more details.
- The situation in Ukraine has exacerbated challenges for Lebanon including: (1) availability of wheat in global market; (2) High food, fuel and shipping prices; (3) No grain reserve in Lebanon; (4) Reliance on wheat subsidy scheme in Lebanon.
- Wheat remains the only commodity subsidized at the LBP 1,500 rate and the commercial sector is the sole importer of wheat in Lebanon. 96% of Lebanon's wheat imports came from Ukraine and Russia.
- Removal of Bread Subsidy has the potential to increase the price of the food SMEB from LBP 662,000 (week of March 28) to LBP 859,000.
- There is a noted decrease in imports of 21 percent in 2022 comparison to the first quarter of 2021. There is a decrease in most categories when compared to the 2021 in terms of the total metric tons imported through the Port of Beirut.
- In addition, products are increasingly scarce since March 2022: this had previously stabilized since September 2021 after the peak of the fuel crisis.
- Commodities prices have increased on the international markets. Wheat prices increased by 25 percent, crude oil by 20 percent, and sugar by 7 percent between February and March 2022.
- In Lebanon, food SMEB increased by 18 percent (in LBP) and 3 percent (in USD) since the start of the Ukraine situation. The following have seen the largest increase in prices: sunflower oil (88 percent), sugar (72 percent), and bread (38 percent).
- Decreasing availability of key commodities on the international markets and increasing agriculture production costs might also further affect prices both internationally and locally.

B) Elections *(as presented by Joelle Assaf, Analysis Officer, UNDP)*

- See PPT for more details.
- Pre-elections analysis emphasized there was not a foreseeable high risk of organized or major offline violence, however micro-level insecurity and increasing incidents were expected.
- Key areas of risk (Beirut II, Chouf, North II, Bekaa III). Perception survey revealed that 58.1% of Lebanese were concerned about the threat of electoral violence.
- Respondents were asked, 'Thinking about the area where you live, how likely do you think it is that competition in the elections will also provoke clashes between the supporters of different parties in the area'.
- The overall electoral process took place in a generally calm and organized climate. No widespread communal violence occurred and the use of arms was minimal.

