

GENEVA, 2nd October 2012

BRIEFER: Adrian Edwards, UNHCR Spokesman

TOPICS:

1. Registered Syrian refugees in surrounding states triple in three months
2. More than 25,000 refugees return home from Republic of Congo since May

This is a summary of what was said by the UNHCR spokesperson at today's Palais des Nations press briefing in Geneva

1. Registered Syrian refugees in surrounding states triple in three months

The number of Syrians registered or awaiting registration as refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq has now surpassed 300,000, triple the level of just three months ago. The latest figures show a total regional registered population of more than 311,500 Syrian refugees in the four countries, compared to around 100,000 in June.

The continuing rapid growth in refugee numbers underscores the urgency of last week's revised Syria Regional Response Plan seeking \$487.9 million in support of up to 710,000 Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries by the end of this year. The generosity and hospitality shown by these countries as they struggle to cope with growing numbers of refugees make it essential that the international community provide as much support as possible. Many refugees and the communities hosting them are already running out of resources.

Compounding the urgency is the upcoming onset of winter temperatures across the region, in less than 10 weeks from now. We are in a race against time. In Jordan, for example, where thousands are living in tents, the average low temperature between mid-November and mid-March is two degrees Celsius. A winterization plan is being developed, but it too requires support and funding.

LEBANON: The number of registered Syrian refugees and those awaiting registration in Lebanon is now more than 80,800 people. The Lebanese government estimates that, in addition, tens of thousands of Syrians have entered Lebanon this year and not yet returned. Registered or not, they all live on the local economy - often depending on relatives or their own resources. It is expected that an increasing number will be seeking assistance in the coming months as the resources of refugees as well as their host families become seriously stretched. Thus, the revised Syria response plan estimates a registered Syrian refugee population of 120,000 by the end of 2012.

The scattered nature of the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon is posing challenges in providing assistance in often remote areas. Some 56 percent are residing in the north; 41 percent in the Bekaa; and three percent in Beirut and the south. Many of the hosting communities are among the most economically depressed in Lebanon. As numbers increase and the winter months approach, needs are increasing and becoming more acute. UNHCR and partner agencies are rolling out a winterization program aiming to provide refugee families and vulnerable Lebanese ones with fuel for heating, mattresses, blankets and clothes as well as needed refurbishment to accommodations in readiness for the

colder months.