

Brussels, 13 December 2007

## **European Commission allocates €50 million to alleviate plight of Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan**

***The European Commission has decided to grant €50 million in humanitarian and structural support for the provision of basic health and education services for Iraqi refugees in Syria and Jordan.***

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner said: "Iraqi refugees deserve access to education and health services. The authorities of Syria and Jordan have made a tremendous effort to welcome displaced Iraqi families. This is highly appreciated knowing that the large numbers of refugees are a strain to existing public services in both countries. "

The Commission provides humanitarian as well as structural support for the continued provision of basic health and education services in Syria and Jordan.

In respect of humanitarian assistance, the Commission has decided to grant a total of € 10 million for the protection of and basic assistance to the most vulnerable refugees in neighbouring countries. This humanitarian assistance is provided under the authority of Louis Michel, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, through the humanitarian aid department of the Commission.

Commissioner Michel said, "The world's media may still remain focused on the conflict within Iraq, but there are hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqi civilians who are living in the shadow of this war in neighbouring Syria and Jordan – whose story of a daily struggle to survive goes untold. The European Commission, in partnership with the Syrian and Jordanian authorities, is determined to ensure the most vulnerable refugees are not forgotten and receive basic care and assistance."

In terms of support to social systems, the Commission has decided to grant a total of almost € 40 million to help the Jordanian and Syrian institutions cope with the increased demand for public services. Our support will contribute to reinforce the public education system in both Jordan and Syria, so as to facilitate the integration of Iraqi children into schools. In Syria, we will also contribute to maintain the quality of the health public system in areas where there is a strong presence of refugees.

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner underlined: "The Commission will continue to provide assistance in the close co-operation with national authorities, EU Member States and other donors – in particular the UN agencies – to provide an effective response to the needs of the Iraqi refugees and their host communities."

Since 2003, the Iraqi people have been confronted in their daily lives with a situation of extreme violence and many have been forced to leave their homes. The Samarra bombing of February 2006 caused an even higher flow of displaced people. Whereas many Iraqis have found refuge in safer areas in their home country, large numbers have had to leave Iraq in search of protection. UNHCR estimates that some 2 million people are now hosted in neighbouring countries, notably Syria and Jordan.

The rapid and sudden increase in population poses a considerable challenge to both the Syrian and Jordanian governments. This concerns in the first place the continued provision of basic health and education services – the areas targeted by the support of the Commission.

For further information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/iraq/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/iraq/intro/index.htm)