

**Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson**

**Icelandic Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**Speech at Syria Conference in Brussels 4 April 2017**

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen

Six years of senseless violence in Syria have devastated the lives of millions of Syrians.

The latest casualties are the victims of the horrendous attack on the town of Khan Sheikhoun yesterday. Iceland strongly condemns all use of chemical weapons and those who are responsible must be held accountable. I strongly urge the Security Council to take immediate actions against these atrocities [and I urge all participants to support Liechtenstien's initiative "Accountability Mechanism for Syria"].

Although we can investigate, seek justice and punish the guilty, we cannot bring back those innocents who perished in Khan Sheikhoun yesterday - rather than the hundreds of thousands of victims of this terrible war. But we are here today to help the survivors and help more to survive. Let us not hesitate, let us not fail that important and historic duty.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The war in Syria has become a major threat to regional and global stability, and a breeding ground for terrorism. The neighboring countries have borne the brunt of the refugee situation. Host communities have been under immense pressure and shown incredible generosity and resilience in accommodating almost five million Syrian refugees.

The UN and its special envoy, Staffan de Mistura, are doing brave work in helping the parties to find a political solution. But only the parties to the conflict can make peace. They need to be strongly encouraged along this path and here, the role of the UN Security Council is essential. In the meantime, all parties must adhere to international law and must allow unhindered humanitarian access.

Iceland has honored its commitments put forward at last year's conference in London. In the last eighteen months, Iceland has already contributed in total almost 8 million dollars to the humanitarian response. During the same period, Iceland also allocated 10 million dollars to welcoming the largest number of refugees to the country since the war in former Yugoslavia.

Between this year and 2020, Iceland will have contributed a minimum of 7 million dollars for Syria and the region and another 4.5 million dollars by welcoming more Syrian refugees to Iceland.

In addition to this, Iceland has now concluded four new agreements with UN agencies worth 4.5 million dollars, committing ourselves to predictable multi-year humanitarian funding and I urge more donors to do so.

Thank you.