**MSF aid convoy in relief of earthquake victims enters northwest Syria**

***The international organization calls for the urgent scaling up of humanitarian supplies, which currently fail to even match pre-earthquake volumes***

A Doctors Without Borders (MSF) convoy of 14 trucks entered northwestern Syria today, arriving from Türkiye through the Hammam border crossing point. This first convoy carries 1,296 tents destined to families (of 5 people or more) left homeless by the earthquake and 1,296 winter kits to insulate the tents from the cold. Other MSF convoys are planned to follow quickly to deliver medical and non-medical equipment.

However, warns MSF, an urgent increase in the volume of supplies is needed to match the scale of the humanitarian crisis. In the ten days following the earthquake, the number of trucks that crossed the border into northwest Syria was lower than the average number for 2022. Present in the area for more than 10 years, MSF teams have been able to immediately launch an emergency response.

*“We emptied our emergency stocks in three days, donating nearly 12 tons (4,000 cubic meters) of surgical equipment, dressing and medicines to hospitals. Our teams provided support to the health facilities in the area until they were exhausted",* explains Hakim Khaldi, head of mission for MSF in Syria*. "But we did not see any help from the outside. Aid is trickling in in negligible amounts for the moment.”*

Our teams identified enormous unmet needs in terms of relief.  Access to accommodation and decent hygiene conditions are far from being granted, especially as the 180 000 people newly displaced by the 6th February earthquake add to the two-million people displaced by 12 years of war and already living in precarious conditions. MSF is currently providing relief and medical support to the people living in five reception centers in Northern Idlib (a mobile team provides health care and we distributed tents, water, bread, blankets, mattresses and fire extinguishers). Activities aimed at ensuring the continuity of access to health care for both victims of the earthquake and the general population are starting next week.

Humanitarian aid provided to the region through the cross-border mechanism has not even matched its pre-earthquake average volume yet. According to UN data, 5 days after the earthquake, only 10 trucks had entered Syria through Bab al-Hawa, a UN-coordinated border crossing point for humanitarian aid from neighbouring Türkiye.

As of 17 February, a total of 178 trucks loaded with aid provided by six UN agencies had crossed into northwest Syria through Bab Al-Hawa and Bab Al-Salama since the earthquakes eleven days before. In 2022, 7,566 trucks loaded with aid crossed from Türkiye into northwest Syria, which represents an average of 227 trucks for the same period of 11 days.

Furthermore, part of the 178 trucks that reached Northwest Syria were not part of the earthquake response but rather already-planned deliveries. Even considering 3 days of border closure, the current volume of trucks is barely matching the humanitarian response before the disaster.

The border crossing of the MSF convoy was possible thanks to the support of Al Ameen, a Syrian NGO partnering with MSF. The delivery was arranged outside of the United Nations cross-border humanitarian mechanism coordinated by the WHO, which does not cover logistical equipment.

MSF calls for the immediate scaling up of the assistance for the people affected by the earthquake in northwest Syria, in order to address the new humanitarian needs adding to those already prevailing in the area. In particular, priority should be given to supplying shelters and water and sanitation equipment, as well as the medical supplies necessary for post-operative care and to maintain continuity of care, amongst other items which are urgently needed.