

Item 3.2

Türkiye and Syria Earthquakes

File No: S051491

Minute by the Lord Mayor

To Council:

Shortly after 4am (12pm AEDT) on Monday 6 February 2023, a magnitude-7.8 earthquake hit southern Türkiye. Just over five hours later, a second magnitude-7.5 earthquake rocked the region about 150km north of the first.

The combined impact of the two earthquakes is among the worst Türkiye has recorded in decades. They have left a wave of destruction across central and southern Türkiye, sprawling into nearby Syria, with their impact felt as far south as Egypt and as far east as Iraq.

As at 16 February 2023, the death toll from the earthquakes was almost 42,000. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has now declared that the earthquakes are the worst natural disaster in the region in a hundred years.

In Turkey, the two earthquakes and hundreds of aftershocks destroyed at least 6,444 buildings across 10 provinces. Skyscrapers and apartment buildings collapsed and were reduced to rubble, with thousands being trapped underneath. Despite rescue efforts being hampered by a lack of equipment, areas being inaccessible and heavy snowstorms, survivors were still being found a week later.

According to WHO approximately 26 million people have been affected: 15 million in Türkiye and 10.87 million in the whole of Syria. Many Turkish people have lost their homes with estimated one million people living in tents and temporary shelters or sleeping rough. Tent cities have sprung up in devastated areas, providing little shelter from sub-zero temperatures. Up to five million people may be homeless in Syria, many already internally displaced after fleeing civil war.

Over 80 hospitals and health facilities have been partially or severely damaged, making it difficult to treat the more than 80,000 people who have been hospitalised.

Children in particular are suffering, with UNICEF estimating that more than seven million children are affected: 4.6 million children living in the 10 provinces of Turkey hit by the earthquakes, and over 2.5 million children in Syria. Thousands of those who died were children, while many of those who survived have been separated from their families. Even before the devastating earthquake, more than 6.5 million children in Syria needed humanitarian aid due to the ongoing conflict.

I extend my deepest sympathy to the families of the victims who lost their lives, who have been injured and who have lost their homes and livelihoods. This has been a difficult time for Turkish and Syrian communities across Australia and overseas who have loved ones, friends and acquaintances living in areas affected by the earthquake. Many have experienced anxious times waiting to learn if they have survived. My thoughts are with you.

An international humanitarian response is now underway with international aid organisations and over 80 countries pledging support for victims of the earthquake, including humanitarian aid.

Australia's Government is contributing to \$18 million to the international aid effort. On 7 February 2023, the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese announced Australia would provide \$10 million in humanitarian assistance through the Red Cross and Red Crescent partners and humanitarian agencies, with this assistance targeting those in greatest need.

On 15 February 2023, he announced a further contribution of \$8 million of which \$4.5 million will go to Australian non-government organisations in Türkiye helping to protect those made most vulnerable by the earthquakes, search and rescue efforts and other emerging needs. The other \$3.5 million will help the United Nations Population Fund to deliver maternal and child health services and protect women and girls without safe housing in Syria.

An Urban Search and Rescue team of over 70 personnel have been deployed to Türkiye to assist local authorities. Turkish and Syrian communities across Australia are also raising funds and receiving donations of urgently needed supplies.

On Thursday 9 February 2023, a black ribbon symbolising remembrance and mourning was projected onto the sails of the Sydney Opera House in a show of solidarity with the people of Türkiye and Syria.

I am proposing that the City of Sydney support these efforts with two donations of \$50,000 each to two Australian charities which are supporting aid projects in Türkiye and Syria.

The donation to the Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited Syria and Türkiye Earthquake Appeal will help send life saving supplies to children in urgent need. UNICEF teams are on the ground, working round the clock to provide urgent assistance to children and families impacted by the devastating earthquake. Children face extra risks to their health without supplies of food and clean water.

The donation to the Australian Red Cross Türkiye-Syria Earthquakes Appeal will help provide immediate and longer-term relief to communities affected by the earthquakes.

This support includes:

- emergency relief assistance such as search and rescue and first aid services, health, shelter and non-food items;
- specialist aid workers to assist local teams to respond to the crisis; and
- helping people to restore contact with family members separated by the earthquakes by offering services to maintain family links and locate missing family members.

These donations comply with the City of Sydney's Support for Charities Policy adopted by Council on 21 November 2022, are in line with previous donations and align with objective 7.3.2 (2) of the City's Operational Plan 2022/23, which states that the City will support communities beyond our local area and international communities experiencing emergency situations.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council donate:
 - (i) \$50,000 to the Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited as part of their Syria and Türkiye Earthquake Appeal, from the 2022/23 General Contingency Fund; and
 - (ii) \$50,000 to the Australian Red Cross Türkiye-Syria Earthquakes Appeal from the 2022/23 General Contingency Fund; and
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to arrange a program for staff donations to the above earthquake recovery appeals and for Council to match dollar for dollar any contributions until the end of March 2023 from the 2022/23 General Contingency Fund.

COUNCILLOR CLOVER MOORE

Lord Mayor