



**Ms. Ursula von der Leyen**

President  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium

20 March 2023

Dear President,

In the wake of the tragic losses of human lives and humanitarian, social and economic challenges caused by the February 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria, the European business community reaffirms its solidarity and cooperation with the Turkish business community and calls for a coordinated and well-targeted international support in the further stages of relief, recovery and reconstruction of the earthquake affected regions in line with sustainable development goals.

Since the devastating earthquakes on 6 February, the European Union has been by the side of the Turkish people, swiftly mobilizing emergency response under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and coordinating Member States' aid efforts. The leaders of the EU institutions and Member States, business community and civil society stood in solidarity with Türkiye, leading the global response.

Indeed, the earthquakes caused the tragic loss of over 48.000 lives in Türkiye so far and impacted more than 13 million people in ten provinces, hosting large numbers of refugees. About 1,5 million people were rendered homeless and nearly 2 million people moved from affected areas to other regions. The humanitarian situation in the region continues to be severely challenging. While the direct economic loss in terms of damages to buildings, infrastructure and production facilities may be around \$40 billion, some estimate the cost of reconstruction to amount to \$100 billion.

Since the early days of the disaster, the EU mobilised the rescEU strategic reserves and run one of its largest search and rescue operations in Türkiye. High level visits took place noticeably by Commissioner Lenarčič and European Commissioner Várhelyi along with the Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade of Sweden, Johan Forssell. Europe's significant support went beyond rapid emergency assistance when the Donor's Conference was announced by President von der Leyen together with Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson under the Swedish Presidency of the Council on 8 February.



The Donor's Conference chaired jointly by the European Commission and Sweden today, on 20 March, in Brussels should be a fundamental contribution for the relief, recovery, and reconstruction of the affected region through coordination of additional funds from the international community for the victims of the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. BusinessEurope welcomes this initiative from the European Commission and the Swedish Presidency.

BusinessEurope, too, stood in solidarity and followed the developments closely through its member federations TUSIAD (Turkish Industry and Business Association) and TISK (Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations). Many European businesses rapidly and increasingly delivered necessary support to the victims, demonstrating the business community's role as a crucial social player in the light of mounting post-earthquake humanitarian needs.

Despite the Turkish society and international community's relief efforts, the recovery process will be long. Jointly coordinated, multi-disciplined and multi-stakeholder actions and support are needed. The immediate humanitarian needs, and the overall financial impact require a strong and well-coordinated recovery plan, funding mechanisms and investments in the region in line with the sustainable development goals. While prioritizing the immediate humanitarian needs and overcoming the human suffering, there are overwhelming challenges such as disposal of hundreds of millions of tonnes of potentially harmful rubble, while avoiding pollution. Ensuring a sustainable social and economic life in the medium- and long-term through relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction will be essential for the sustainable development and social and economic resilience of the region.

The highly dynamic and complex nature of the situation and guiding principles of our common European agenda necessitate:

- Close EU-Turkey communication and cooperation with a multistakeholder approach for the identification of an effective and comprehensive framework for recovery, and Turkey's European integration process is an important policy tool in this sense,
- Effective coordination of international aid, as well as public and private efforts to ensure robust solutions,
- Targeted use of EU financial support in line with green and digital transition goals to address sustainable and transformative reconstruction of the region.

Together with our members, we are monitoring the situation closely through internal consultative meetings to ensure ongoing information flow and continuing business involvement in the process and to support businesses' important role in the post-disaster response. We stand ready to share information with the European Commission in the further stages of earthquake relief and recovery planning. European business community's firm stance on solidarity and collaboration is one of Europe's greatest assets to recover and bounce back from extreme difficulties that we are facing together.



This tragedy reminds us that it is vital that we do not lose sight of Europe's disaster and emergency resilience, which is an indispensable part of Europe's overall resilience. Therefore, we welcome the European Commission's efforts to enhance European resilience to the natural disaster and deepening the cooperation within the European Civil Protection Mechanism.

Yours sincerely,

Fredrik Persson  
President

Markus Beyrer  
Director General