



norway

General Assembly
62nd Session

Agenda item 32
4th Committee

UNRWA

Check against delivery

STATEMENT

By

Mr Jonas Jølle
Counsellor

New York, 8 November 2007

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Mr Chairman

For nearly 60 years UNRWA has provided the Palestinian refugee population with immediate relief, basic services and the possibility of a life in dignity. We commend the Agency and its staff for their untiring efforts in assisting Palestinian refugees under difficult and often dangerous circumstances. UNRWA has a regional mandate provided by the General Assembly, and its efforts in each of the host countries merit particular recognition.

I would like to thank Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd for her statement. We know that the situation for Palestinian refugees in Gaza and among those displaced from Nahr al-Bared in Northern Lebanon is particularly desperate. As so many times before, UNRWA has to provide the safety net.

Nahr al-Bared should not be forgotten. Thousands of displaced refugees are facing a harsh winter. The massive destruction of livelihoods, education and health facilities should be addressed. Norway responded to the crisis by providing 2 mill USD in humanitarian assistance. We urge all donors to contribute to the Emergency Appeal for Nahr al Bared.

Mr Chairman,

Two years after the Israeli disengagement from Gaza we are faced with a social and economic situation which is rapidly deteriorating. The indicators would have been more negative, had it not been for international food aid. Between 800 and 900.000 people now depend on food aid from UNRWA, another 300.000 from the World Food Programme. The cost of providing food aid is rising steadily as import restrictions increase. These costs are borne by UNRWA and thus by the donor countries. These emergency measures also place a heavy burden on an agency which was set up to deliver basic health and education services. In a situation where the only imports into Gaza are humanitarian goods, there are few prospects for economic development. We call upon Israel to ease its restrictions on the movement of goods and people and to refrain from administering punitive measures on an entire population by reducing the supply of fuel and electricity to Gaza.

Norway will continue to be a strong supporter of UNRWA. We will also continue our efforts to keep the plight of Palestinian refugees on the international agenda.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.