



PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**STATEMENT BY MR. CAN DIZDAR,
COUNSELOR OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UN,
BEFORE THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE ON AGENDA
ITEM 32: "UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST"**

New York, 8 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey has aligned itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, my remarks will be brief.

Mr. Chairman,

The political dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians has reached one of the most intensive levels in years. It is our sincere wish that the window of opportunity created by this momentum can be seized and paves the way for a comprehensive and lasting settlement. In this vein, we welcome the ongoing negotiation process between the two sides and hope that its outcome can prepare the ground for a successful international conference on the Middle East. We ardently wish that the prospective international conference could break the entrenched stalemate and bring to life the vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

In the meantime, we also follow the developments on the ground with serious concern. It should have been realized by now that applying unilateral measures which bring about nothing but misery and desperation cannot be of benefit to anyone. It is high time for a genuine political dialogue in the Middle East. The current critical stage requires both Israelis and the Palestinians to act with utmost restraint more than ever. Therefore, we urge both parties to refrain from any action which might jeopardize the prospect of a permanent peace in the region which has been elusive for years.

Mr. Chairman,

The future of the Palestinian refugees is not only an important component of a possible peace plan, but also a serious issue with a heavy humanitarian dimension. We heard yesterday a highly informative and articulate presentation from the Commissioner – General of UNRWA,

www.un.int/turkey

Mrs. Karen Koning AbuZayd which portrayed how tragic the conditions on the ground for the Palestinian refugees are. As long as the Israeli – Palestinian conflict remains unsettled, its political, socio-economic and psychological toll on the innocent will keep growing.

As the economic and security situation continues to decline on the ground, the maintenance of an effective relief and humanitarian operation is becoming increasingly difficult.

In this picture, the achievements of UNRWA are highly commendable. The agency is becoming a symbol of making things possible in an impossible environment. I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to Mrs. AbuZayd and the members of UNRWA staff who perform their duties by risking their own lives, for their professionalism and invaluable efforts to ease the plight of the Palestinian refugees.

Turkey also welcomes and supports the steps taken in the context of the ongoing reform process within UNRWA aiming to increase the efficiency of the Agency's activities and services. Turkey feels privileged to chair the Working Group on the financing of UNRWA. On this occasion, I wish to acknowledge the immense contribution Mr. Jonas Jolle of Norway makes to the work of this working group by serving as its Rapporteur.

It is indeed incumbent upon the international community to extend its full support to UNRWA to ensure the Agency's continued and active involvement in addressing the drastic needs of the Palestinian refugees.

In this vein, Turkey remains fully committed to the goals and mandate of UNRWA. We have not only increased our annual voluntary contribution to the Agency, but also responded to the emergency appeals necessitated by sudden developments. Most recently, Turkey donated UNRWA 1.1 million US Dollars worth of food for distribution to refugees displaced from Nahr El Bared Camp in Northern Lebanon.

Our firm support to UNRWA will continue. In the meantime, we will also carry on the flow of direct assistance to the people of Palestine through a plan of action covering security, education, public financing, institution-building, health and agriculture which complement UNRWA's programs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.