



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail [australia@un.int](mailto:australia@un.int)

150 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 [www.AustraliaUN.org](http://www.AustraliaUN.org)

## **FOURTH COMMITTEE**

**1 November 2011**

# **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

**Statement by HE Ms Philippa King  
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative  
of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

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Australia welcomes this opportunity to again commend the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and its staff for their commitment and dedication to providing essential services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian Territories. We also thank UNRWA Commissioner-General, Mr Filippo Grandi, for his informative presentation on 31 October and for his effective leadership of UNRWA in challenging circumstances.

Australia welcomes the continued emphasis by UNRWA on fiscal responsibility and organisational reform, necessary to increase transparency and efficiency of aid delivery. We are conscious of the significant pressures the Agency is facing in these difficult economic times.

We take this opportunity to recognise the often substantial in-kind contributions made by the host countries to UNRWA. We welcome new contributions made by non-traditional donors and also call on other countries, particularly regional countries, to continue to increase their

support for UNRWA as a tangible demonstration of their commitment to the Palestinian people.

Australia is a long-standing supporter of UNRWA, which has provided essential service to the Palestinian people for over 60 years. Australia recognises that the work of UNRWA makes an important contribution to the security and stability of the region.

Australia's decision to increase its support for UNRWA over the next five years will place it among the top ten UNRWA donors and reflects the value we place on UNRWA's work. Australia has been a long-standing supporter of UNRWA and has contributed around \$53 million to UNRWA since 2006. Australia is in the final stages of planning a new five-year partnership with UNRWA which, once finalised, will result in the disbursement of predictable levels of financial assistance. This type of multi-year funding will therefore allow UNRWA to better strategically plan its aid delivery resources.

Australia's assistance will be disbursed "unearmarked" into the UNRWA General Fund. Australia believes the flexibility of "unearmarked" funding arrangements will allow UNRWA to implement activities according to its priorities and to make sound, strategic humanitarian aid delivery decisions. This will in turn allow UNRWA to deliver more effective results for Palestinian refugees.

At the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) for the Palestinian Territories in September this year, Australia announced plans to significantly increase contributions to Palestinian humanitarian and development activities. Since 2007, we have contributed around \$190 million in capacity building and humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, including \$43.8 million in the 2011 financial year.

Australia's contributions over the next five years will exceed \$300 million. This assistance includes support for civil society including in the area of livelihoods, especially amongst women; the provision of a significant number of scholarships to assist in institution and governance development in the Palestinian Territories; and water and sanitation projects in Palestinian schools. It also includes \$120 million of funding over five years for the Palestinian Authority through the World Bank Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) Trust Fund. This agreement was signed between Australian Foreign Minister Rudd and Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad in New York on 18 September.

I would also take this opportunity to reiterate Australia's genuine commitment to peace and security in the Middle East. Australia strongly supports a negotiated two-state solution that will allow an independent Palestinian state to live side-by-side in security with Israel. We welcome the Middle East Quartet's 23 September statement describing a timetable for negotiations, and calling on parties to agree an agenda and to refrain from provocation.

We urge both sides to return to negotiations urgently on final status issues, and refrain from actions which undermine trust.

Australia will continue to support the establishment of a future Palestinian state.

In concluding, Australia reiterates its concern about Palestinian refugees, and its long-standing and growing commitment to UNRWA and its valuable work.

