



General Assembly  
Special Political and Decolonization Committee  
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Agenda Item 52:  
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Statement delivered by  
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*Check against delivery*

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Croatia<sup>1</sup>, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup> and Montenegro<sup>1</sup>, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

Madam Chair,

As the European Union has stated before, for more than 60 years, UNRWA has been the leading force in the efforts of the international community to help improve the living conditions and promote the human development of the more than 4.7 million Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. UNRWA's steadfast commitment through the years to the fulfilment of its tasks - in sometimes very difficult circumstances - needs to be saluted.

In this context, let me express once again the European Union's deep appreciation for the invaluable work performed by the Agency.

The European Union commends the efforts deployed by UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Mr Filippo Grandi, who - since his appointment in 2010 - has continued to steer the Agency further along the path of improvements and reforms, to ensure that the Agency would be able to face the challenges of the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

The European Union wishes to commend the unyielding commitment of UNRWA's staff and management who courageously assume their responsibilities, often under difficult or dangerous conditions, to provide essential services to Palestine refugees and to their communities. UNRWA's activities in the areas of education, health, relief and social services, microfinance as well as infrastructure and camp improvement, are all crucial to the well-being of the refugee population.

Madam Chair,

The European Union and its Member States remain UNRWA's largest donor. Over the period from 2000 to 2010, the European Union as such, through the European Commission, has provided more than €1.2 billion of support to UNRWA. The Member States of the European Union have also individually contributed significant amounts during that same period.

This continued commitment by the European Union and its Member States to support generously the activities of UNRWA is a reflection of the Union's humanitarian engagement. It is also a reflection of the contribution that UNRWA makes to regional security and stability.

The European Union sees its relationship with UNRWA in a long-term perspective, as illustrated by the EU-UNRWA multi-annual Joint Declarations which give an indication of the Union's support to UNRWA's General Fund for several years at a time. The latest Joint Declaration, covering the years 2011 to 2013, was signed by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, by EU Commissioner Štefan Füle and by UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2011. In this declaration the European Union envisages an annual contribution of €80 Million to UNRWA's General Fund, subject to budgetary allocations.

In 2011, the EU's contribution to UNRWA has been one of the highest in the past few years, reaching €124 Million by October 2011. As per usual practice, the biggest single portion of the Union's support to UNRWA has been the contribution to UNRWA's General Fund. Consequently, these resources can be used to pay the salaries for teachers, doctors and social workers in the refugee camps. On top of this year's allocation to the General Fund, the European Union also provided an additional contribution of €2.4 Million, funded from reflows from other programmes, thus bringing the EU allocation to the General Fund for 2011 to €82.4 Million.

A further €22 Million was mobilised from the European Union's so-called Instrument for Stability (IstS). €10 Million were earmarked for UNRWA's Gaza Early Recovery Programme, thus further consolidating the Union's support to Palestine refugees in Gaza. €12 Million were allocated to the reconstruction of the Nahr el Bared Camp in Lebanon. Moreover, UNRWA also received €14.3 Million in humanitarian aid from ECHO, the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission. Out of these, UNRWA received €12 Million to fund, among other things, its emergency appeal for Food Aid in the Gaza Strip and €2.3 Million earmarked for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

This year, UNRWA also received €5 Million through the European Union's Food Security Thematic Programme. This programme is designed to enable the provision of nutrition to the poorest and most vulnerable refugees.

In 2011, the European Union has once again been a strong supporter of UNRWA's Summer Games in Gaza, which constitute a unique occasion to gather the children of the Gaza Strip in a festive and stimulating event with positive and hope-inspiring connotations. In this context, the European Union condemns that this year, once again, some of the facilities of the UNRWA Games were vandalised in July.

The European Union is particularly concerned about developments in Syria affecting the operations of UNRWA and regrets the attack on the Latakia area in which the refugee camp is located, in August of this year. The EU immediately mobilised additional funding for two UNRWA projects in the camp, for a total of nearly €11 Million. The first project, entitled "Engaging Youth" built on a previous project targeting young people while the second new project focused on protecting vulnerable Palestine refugees.

Madam Chair,

Throughout the years, the European Union has emerged as UNRWA's most predictable and reliable donor. The EU is well aware of UNRWA's financial difficulties and rising challenges. For this reason, it has already set in motion the internal procedures to enable it to frontload its 2012 contribution to UNRWA's General Fund, in order to ensure continuity of service delivery to Palestine refugees.

The European Union strongly urges new donors to commit financially to the work of UNRWA, and existing donors to consider increasing their contributions. A widened donor base would provide much needed stability to the Agency and would facilitate the fulfilment of its tasks and the successful implementation of its reform programme. The European Union and its Member States will remain unwavering in their support to these endeavours.

Thank you Madam Chair.

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