



# NORWAY

**General Assembly**  
**61<sup>th</sup> session**  
**Agenda item 31 UNRWA**  
**Fourth Committee**

**Presentation of the Report of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.**

Check against delivery

## STATEMENT

By

**Berit Enge**  
**Minister Counsellor**

**New York, 31 October 2006**  
**Rapporteur**

*www.norway-un.org*

## WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCING OF UNRWA

1. Norway has the honor to introduce the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, appearing as A/61/347. The report was adopted by the Group on 13 September under the able Chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Baki Ilkin, the Permanent Representative of Turkey.
2. The Working Group noted with concern the large funding gap for the UNRWA regular budget in 2006, due to an anticipated shortfall in pledges, which will have adverse consequences for the level of services provided to over 4.3 million registered Palestine refugees. The Group reiterated that it is the responsibility of the international community to ensure that UNRWA services are maintained at an acceptable level in quantitative and qualitative terms and that funding keeps pace with the natural growth of the refugee population and its changing needs. It therefore urged the international community to fully fund the budget for the biennium 2006-2007. If fully funded, this budget will enable the Agency to reverse the effects of successive years of underfunding, bring services up to host Government standards, and rehabilitate infrastructure - including camp and shelter conditions - and improve the Agency's capacity to evaluate and manage its programmes.
3. In view of the growing humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, the Working Group recognized the critical humanitarian role the Agency's emergency operations in the occupied Palestinian territory are playing in alleviating the hardship of the refugees and preventing an even greater decline in their living conditions. The Group urged the international community to fully fund the Agency's revised Emergency Appeal for 2006.
4. In this regard, the Group also commended UNRWA Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd for her commitment to keeping the major donors and host authorities informed and involved, including through the newly expanded and reinvigorated Advisory Commission, opening new avenues of support and funding and seeking a broader base of donors.
5. In addition, the Working Group called for the early and complete fulfilment of pledges and other commitments to UNRWA, in particular the reimbursement of value-added tax by the Palestinian Authority and port and related charges by the Israeli Government.

6. Given the importance of ensuring that resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible, the Working Group appreciated the leadership of the Commissioner-General, who oversaw the increasingly vigorous process of reform in UNRWA. At its June 2006 Meeting, the expanded Advisory Commission endorsed the Agency's organizational development strategy, a comprehensive reform programme prepared in close consultation with UNRWA stakeholders, which built on the outcomes of the June 2004 Geneva conference and subsequent reforms, and benefited from substantive input from UNRWA stakeholders. The organizational development programme seeks to strengthen UNRWA management and human resources capacity, enhance its effectiveness through improved needs-assessment and programme evaluation, and further develop a results-based management and programme culture in UNRWA.

## **Conclusion**

7. The Working Group noted with satisfaction that at the request of the Lebanese Government in 2006 the Agency prepared a comprehensive development plan for the 12 refugee camps located in Lebanon, which called for an investment of \$50 million in refugee housing, sanitation and social services. It recalled that Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora has officially endorsed the plan as part of a welcome government initiative to improve the living conditions and economic prospects in Lebanon of the refugees.
8. The Working Group continues to believe that UNRWA plays a vital role in preserving the stability and security of the region. Its cost-effective services constituted a vital investment in the human development and well-being of the refugees by the international community. The continued commitment of the international community to the refugees remained essential in the absence of a just and durable solution to their problem and in light of the continuing conflicts in the region which had devastating economic and social consequences for them. The Working Group hopes, therefore, that the international support for UNRWA embodied in the resolutions adopted each year by the General Assembly, in which the Assembly recognizes the importance of the work of the Agency, will be translated in practice into increased support to ensure the continuation of the Agency on a sound financial basis.