BELGIUM CONTRIBUTES EUR 2.45 MILLION TO SUPPORT PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

11 January 2016

The Kingdom of Belgium has made a generous contribution of EUR 2.45 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in support of the Agency's services for Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory. The contribution will be divided between the UNRWA shelter assistance programme in the Gaza Strip and supporting the Mobile Mental Health Programme, targeting vulnerable Bedouin communities, in the West Bank.

Over the course of the 2014 armed conflict in Gaza, 141,117 Palestine refugee houses were impacted and 9,117 of those totally demolished. The Belgian contribution will assist Palestine refugees to repair and rebuild their houses, at a time in which a lack of funding is leaving tens of thousands of families unable to undertake repair work or receive their rental subsidies.

As a result of their traditionally nomadic lifestyle, Bedouin Palestine refugees in the West Bank are particularly vulnerable to the heavy restrictions placed on freedom of movement and land access by the Israeli authorities. Six mobile community mental health teams in the West Bank assist 55 Bedouin Palestine refugee communities by supporting their psychosocial well-being, responding to mental health problems, and strengthening their resilience and coping capacities.

The Kingdom of Belgium is a major UNRWA partner and has been a member of the UNRWA Advisory Commission since 1953. Since 2007, they have contributed over US$ 90 million to support the Agency's core programmes and services, as well as its emergency programmes in Syria and Gaza.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine Refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions and financial support has been outpaced by the growth in needs. As a result, the UNRWA Programme Budget, which supports the delivery of core essential services operates with a large shortfall, projected for 2016 to stand at US$ 81 million. UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large shortfalls, are funded through separate funding portals.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and microfinance.

For more information, please contact:

Christopher Gunness
Spokesperson, Director of Advocacy & Strategic Communications
Mobile:
+972 (0)54 240 2659
Office:
+972 (0)2 589 0267
c.gunness@unrwa.org

Sami Mshasha
Chief of Communications, Arabic Language Spokesperson
Mobile:
+972 (0)54 216 8295
Office:
+972 (0)2 589 0724
s.mshasha@unrwa.org