PRESS RELEASE

Sweden increases support to Palestine refugees to US$ 40.6 million

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East Jerusalem

Sweden has announced an increase in its annual contribution to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Programme Budget to US$ 40.6 million. This 15 per cent increase follows the past years growth in Sweden's support for the Agency, highlighting its status as a consistent and valued partner in aiding Palestine refugees. In addition, Sweden's support to the UNRWA emergency appeal will be announced later on this year.

Reiterating Sweden's commitment to the well-being of Palestine refugees, Sweden's Consul General Ann-Sofie Nilsson said: "The decision to increase our core funding to UNRWA shows the great importance that Sweden attaches to the Agency and its work for Palestine refugees." On a visit to the Ama'ri refugee camp in Ramallah on the occasion of the release of the annual contribution, Consul-General Ann-Sofie Nilsson met with Palestine refugees in the camp on issues relating to protection and women's empowerment.

One of the largest bilateral humanitarian donors in the world, Sweden is a long-standing supporter of UNRWA. Since the Agency's inception, Sweden has consistently been among its top donors in terms of funding volume. Between 1993 and 2016, the Swedish contribution to the UNRWA Programme Budget amounted to more than US$ 693 million, including the latest contribution of US$ 40.6 million.

In times of financial and political uncertainty for Palestine refugees, Sweden's constant support is critical. The Agency's human development work in health,

education, relief and social services for Palestine refugees would not be possible without the support of donors like Sweden. Also a valued member of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, advising and assisting the Commissioner-General in carrying out the Agency's mandate, Sweden held the commission's rotating chairmanship between July 2014 and 2015.

– Ends –

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
UNRWA Spokesperson
Mobile: +972 (0)54 240 2659
Office: +972 (0)2 589 0267
c.gunness@unrwa.org
Twitter: @ChrisGunness

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