PRESS RELEASE

Korean Initiative ‘Better Life for Girls’ Contributes US$ 447,996 to Support Refugees through the UNRWA Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programme in Gaza



Youngwoo Kim, Country Director of the KOICA Palestine Office, and Matthias Burchard, Acting Director of the Department of External Relations and Communications at UNRWA, signed an agreement on 26 February confirming Korea’s contribution of US$ 447,996 to UNRWA in support of the Agency’s technical and vocational education and training programme in Gaza. © *2016 UNRWA Photo by Leslie Yun*

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East Jerusalem

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) signed an agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) earlier today, pledging US$ 447,996 in support of the UNRWA technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programme in the Gaza Strip.

The contribution will enable UNRWA to conduct a comprehensive study of its existing TVET programme in Gaza, with the aim of improving its effectiveness and maximizing employment prospects for TVET students and graduates. The study will focus on highlighting relevant job sectors and developing new courses under the programme, paying special attention to industries that offer opportunities to Palestine refugee women.

“Despite living amid repeated conflict and ongoing blockade, young Palestine refugees in Gaza continue to demonstrate remarkable ingenuity and innovation on a daily basis. Our TVET programme seeks to develop their talents and ensure they are prepared for the challenging labour market by equipping them with the right skills and training,” said Matthias Burchard, Acting Director of the Department of External Relations and Communications at UNRWA, who represented the Agency at today’s signing. “Within this context, we are deeply grateful for this latest contribution from KOICA, which will play a significant role in improving the employment prospects of Palestine refugee youth in Gaza.”

“Better Life for Girls (BLG) is one of the new initiatives presented by the President of the Republic of Korea (South Korea) at the UN Sustainable Development Summit last September. In order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through the BLG initiative, KOICA is paying special attention to support the most vulnerable group, refugee women in Gaza,” said Youngwoo Kim, Country Director of the KOICA Palestine Office. “Given the high unemployment rate of youth in Gaza, KOICA seeks to make a contribution to problem-solving with UNRWA through the TVET programme.”

UNRWA currently manages two TVET centres in Gaza – which today has the highest unemployment rate in the world –offering approximately 50 regular courses and employing over 200 hundred staff. As the most reputable organization in Gaza delivering technical and vocational education and training, UNRWA has extensive experience in delivering vocational short-term training courses, in afternoon shifts, for vulnerable groups in high-demand fields in the local market.

This latest agreement builds upon previous contributions by KOICA in support of education and innovation initiatives for young Palestine refugees in Gaza, including US$ 400,000 in 2011 towards the purchase of 556 computers for 23 schools and a commitment of US$ 1.3 million over three years (2015-2017) to support ‘Gaza Gateway’, the Agency’s social enterprise project for the information technology sector. In recent years, the South Korean government has rapidly increased its contributions to UNRWA, providing a total of US$ 2.29 million in 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.

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