PRESS RELEASE

Italy Contributes EUR 6.6 million to Core UNRWA Programmes and Services

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East Jerusalem

The Government of Italy, through the Italian Development Cooperation, has contributed EUR 6.6 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in support of the Agency's core programmes and services. This year's amount represents a 61 per cent increase over the Italian contribution to the UNRWA Programme Budget in 2015 and is the first part of a total EUR 10 million commitment by the Italian government to the Agency in 2016. This commitment was announced during the Commissioner-General's two-day mission to Italy in May, during which he met with several senior government officials, as well as members of the academic, non-profit and media sectors.

"We express our sincere appreciation to the government and people of Italy, who have been a consistent and reliable supporter of UNRWA and of Palestine refugees," said UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl. "This timely contribution is very important to UNRWA's ability to deliver core services to Palestine refugees throughout the region, including education, health care, relief and social services, and camp improvement."

In 2015, Italy contributed EUR 8.75 million (US$ 9.56 million) to UNRWA, including EUR 4.1 million (US$ 4.36 million) for the Agency's core programmes and services, EUR 1 million (US$ 1.09 million) in support of the Agency's humanitarian response to the emergency in Yarmouk, Syria and EUR 2.18 million (US$ 2. 39 million) for food assistance in Gaza.

In addition to the above-mentioned core contribution, the remainder of the EUR 10 million commitment from the Italian Cooperation will fund further humanitarian

initiatives that will be implemented by UNRWA in the occupied Palestinian territory and in response to the Syria regional crisis.

– 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$ 96.5 million. UNRWA encourages all Member States to work collectively to exert all possible efforts to fully fund the Agency's Programme Budget. 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, protection and microfinance.

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