PRESS RELEASE

UNRWA Commissioner-General Calls Attention to Plight of Palestine Refugees during Visit to the Netherlands



UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl (right) attended the opening of 'The Long Journey' exhibition at The Hague
with the Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Lilianne Ploumen (centre), and the Mayor of The Hague, Jozias van Aartsen (left),
during his two-day mission to the Kingdom of the Netherlands this week. Photo courtesy of Dirk-Jan Visser

5 October
East Jerusalem

On 4 October, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl, concluded a two-day mission to the Netherlands, during which he met with several high-level Dutch officials and parliamentarians and attended the opening event of 'The Long Journey', a travelling exhibition of select photographs from the UNRWA Film and Photo Archive, currently being hosted at the City Hall of The Hague.

Over the course of the visit, Mr. Krähenbühl met with the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilianne Ploumen; the Special Envoy for Migration, Bram van Ojik; the Director-General of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Christiaan Rebergen; the Deputy Director-General for Political Affairs, Pieter-Jan Kleiweg de Zwaan; the Director of Stabilization and Humanitarian Aid at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jelte van Wieren; the Director for Multilateral Organizations and Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peter van der Vliet; the Mayor of The Hague, Jozias van Aartsen; the Diplomatic Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs and Defense Issues, David van Weel; and members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Dutch Second Chamber. In his meetings, he discussed the current situation facing Palestine refugees in the Agency's five fields of operations, including those who have been heavily affected by the ongoing conflict in Syria, and the Gaza blockade, and expressed his gratitude for the continued support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to UNRWA. He also participated in a roundtable discussion with several Dutch-based and international non-governmental organizations hosted by Save the Children.

The opening event of 'The Long Journey' Exhibition was held at the City Hall Atrium of The Hague on 3 October and attended by Minister Ploumen, Mayor van Aartsen and Mr. Krähenbühl. The Exhibition features historic images from the UNRWA Film and Photo Archive that illustrate the many challenges Palestine refugees have faced throughout the decades, as well as the ingenuity, courage and steadfastness with which they have responded. "'There are now more than 5 million Palestinian refugees, but we are numbed by numbers," said the Minister. "This Exhibition makes us see that the Palestinian people are not numbers. Each of these people has the right not to be left behind." The Exhibition will be open to the public at the City Hall Atrium until 28 October.

"This visit was a welcome opportunity to bolster our ongoing partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which has played an important role in enabling UNRWA to deliver critical services to Palestine refugees in the areas of education, health care, relief and social services, and in times of emergencies," said Mr. Krähenbühl upon concluding his visit. "We remain profoundly grateful for the continued support of the government and the people of the Netherlands."

The Netherlands is among the top 15 donors to UNRWA. In 2015, Dutch contributions to the Agency totaled US$ 21.4 million, including US$ 16.9 million to the Agency's education, health care and social service programmes and US$ 4.3 million to the 2016 Emergency Appeal for the Syria Regional Crisis. Dutch support to Palestine refugees is also implemented through the European Union's generous contributions to the Agency's Programme Budget, emergency appeals and specific projects. Collectively, the EU and its Member States are the Agency's largest multilateral donor.

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Background Information

EU and UNRWA: Together for Palestine Refugees

Since 1971, the European Union and UNRWA have maintained a strategic partnership governed by the shared objective to support the human development, humanitarian and protection needs of Palestine refugees and promote stability in the Middle East. Today, the European Union is the largest multilateral provider of international assistance to Palestine refugees. This reliable and predictable support from the European Union enables UNRWA to provide daily quality education for roughly half a million children and primary health care for more than 3.5 million patients in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza.. The partnership between the European Union and UNRWA has allowed millions of Palestine refugees to be better educated, live healthier lives, access employment opportunities and improve their living conditions, thus contributing to the development of the entire region.

UNRWA

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. 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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