PRESS RELEASE

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Contributes US$ 67 Million to UNRWA for Projects in Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan



The SFD Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, H.E. Eng. Yousef al-Bassam (right), and the UNRWA Commissioner-General (left), Pierre Krähenbühl, at the agreement signing for the US$ 67 million contribution from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. © 2016 UNRWA Photo.

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East Jerusalem

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, through the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), has contributed US$ 67 million for projects to be implemented in Gaza, the West Bank and Jordan. The three agreements were signed today by the SFD Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, H.E. Eng. Yousef al-Bassam, and the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl.

The first agreement, valued at US$ 28 million, will support ongoing projects, including the reconstruction of shelters in Gaza. The second agreement, valued at US$ 32 million, will assist UNRWA in the reconstruction and furnishing of several health centres and schools in the West Bank and the implementation of several other ongoing projects. The third agreement, valued at US$ 7 million, will provide funds for the reconstruction, furnishing and equipping of two health centres and one school in Jordan.

H.E. Eng. al-Bassam said: “We are a proud partner of UNRWA, which is doing an excellent job of transparently portraying the true situation of Palestine refugees. We shall continue to support UNRWA and we look forward as always to witnessing the impact of these projects on Palestine refugees.”

Expressing his gratitude, Mr. Krähenbühl said: “I am extremely grateful to the government and the people of Saudi Arabia for the sustained support that the Kingdom has extended to UNRWA over the years. The Kingdom has always been forthcoming in its support towards Palestine refugees. I would like to express particular appreciation for the role played by the Saudi Fund for Development in delivering Saudi assistance. Our partnership with the Fund is of high importance to the Agency and deeply appreciated.”

In 2016 alone, Saudi Arabia has contributed more than US$ 150 million to UNRWA, making the Kingdom the second largest donor after the United States. Saudi Arabia has also been a valued member of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, which advises and assists the Commissioner-General in carrying out the Agency’s mandate, since 2005.

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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. 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.

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