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PRESS
RELEASE

Switzerland Supports Core UNRWA Programmes and Makes Additional Contribution to Emergency Response in the occupied Palestinian territory

Véronique Hulmann, Director of Cooperation for Gaza and the West Bank at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Francoise Vanni, Director of External Relations and Communications at UNRWA, discuss the Swiss Confederation's multi-year agreement with UNRWA that will provide CHF 75.5 million (approximately US$ 73.7 million) to the Agency's core programmes and services over the 2017-2020 period.
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3 February 2017

East Jerusalem

The Swiss Confederation, through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has signed a multi-year agreement with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) totaling CHF 75.5 million (approximately US$ 73.7 million) that will go towards the Agency's core programmes and services – including education, health care, relief and social services and protection – over the 2017-2020 period. This

agreement comes shortly after Switzerland's additional contribution of CHF 1.35 million (approximately US$ 1.32 million) in December 2016 to the UNRWA Emergency Appeal for the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) to support the Agency's temporary shelter cash assistance programme in Gaza and protection interventions in the West Bank.

"Given the myriad of challenges that Palestine refugees face today, predictable and reliable support from our partners remains critical in ensuring that their needs are met, not only in times of emergency, but also to support their long-term development," said Francoise Vanni, the Director of the External Relations and Communications Department at UNRWA. "As such, on behalf of UNRWA, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Switzerland for their ongoing support, which will enable us to continue delivering essential services to Palestine refugees throughout the region and help vulnerable refugees who are impacted by the challenging circumstances in the oPt."

At the signing of this agreement, Véronique Hulmann, the Head of Swiss Cooperation Office, added: "Switzerland supports its multilateral partners with multi-year agreements to strengthen the predictability of their funding and to contribute to their financial sustainability, as pledged at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016."

In 2016, Switzerland contributed CHF 25.3 million (US$ 24.9 million) to UNRWA, including CHF 21.9 million to the Agency's core programmes and services. It is currently the Chair of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, which advises and assists the Commissioner-General in carrying out the Agency's mandate, and has been a member since 2005.

– 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. 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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