PRESS RELEASE

UNRWA Commissioner-General Concludes Official Visit to the Russian Federation

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East Jerusalem

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 Moscow on Friday. He met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mikhail L. Bogdanov, who is also the Special Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Africa. The visit follows an announcement by the Russian Federation of a multi-year funding agreement worth US$ 10 million for the 2017-2021 period, in recognition of the Agency's essential role for Palestine refugees.

The meeting was also an opportunity to discuss the worsening humanitarian situation in the region and for the Commissioner-General to share his views on the needs of Palestine refugees in Syria following his recent visit to Aleppo and Damascus. Mr. Krähenbühl also met with Major-General Evgeny Ilin from the Department of International Military Cooperation of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.

"I am grateful to have been able to visit Moscow once again to engage with senior representatives of the Russian government. It is essential that Palestine refugees are not forgotten and I appreciate the strong interest of the Russian Federation in UNRWA's work," said Mr. Krähenbühl. "The recent decision by Russia to establish

a multi-year funding agreement is an important step and a strong message to Palestine refugees that the world remains committed to upholding their rights."

The Commissioner-General also addressed students and faculty members at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, where he shared with the audience the reality facing over 5 million Palestine refugees who experience the effects of blockade, occupation, displacement and conflict on a daily basis. He then shed light on what UNRWA does on behalf of the international community to provide some measure of hope for Palestine refugees while calling for a just and durable solution to their plight.

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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.

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