PRESS RELEASE

Commissioner-General of UNRWA meets Palestinian Prime Minister in Ramallah

17April 2017

East Jerusalem

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl, met today in Ramallah with the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, H.E. Dr. Rami Hamdallah.

The meeting addressed the rights and critical needs of Palestine Refugees in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and Gaza. The Commissioner-General updated the Prime Minister on his recent visit to Aleppo, Syria and the situation of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon and Jordan.

Mr. Krähenbühl thanked the Prime Minister for the remarkable support from the Palestinian Authority during the recent consultation of Member States of the United Nations led by the Secretary-General, Mr António Guterres, on new ways to ensure improved financial sustainability of UNRWA.

The Commissioner-General stated "I am deeply grateful for the role of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Mission in New York, in support of UNRWA".

The Prime Minister and Commissioner-General also reviewed the important issue of the curriculum being taught in UNRWA schools in light of recent public misrepresentations of the matter. Mr Krähenbühl clarified that, in conformity with its practice since the 1950s based on an agreement with UNESCO, UNRWA teaches host-country curricula in its schools. This includes the Palestinian Authority's curriculum and the Commissioner-General clarified that UNRWA has no intention of changing this practice.

The Commissioner-General informed the Prime Minister that it has long been UNRWA's practice to review newly issued textbooks and to produce enriching teaching material, which concerns a limited percentage of the content to ensure consistency with UN values and international agreements. This is done in dialogue with the Palestinian Authority, in particular the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and in full recognition of the right of Palestinian students to learn about their identity, history and culture.

The Prime Minister and the Commissioner-General agreed to a follow-up meeting between UNRWA and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. "The discussion with the Prime Minister was very important, reflecting the solid and constructive partnership between the Palestinian government and UNRWA," Mr. Krähenbühl emphasized.

– 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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