European Commission - Press release

EU supports the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) with €82 million

Brussels, 15 March 2018

Today the European Union has made available €82 million for the 2018 operating budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

This funding will provide access to education for 500,000 children, primary health care for more than 3.5 million patients and assistance to over 250,000 vulnerable refugees.

High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica **Mogherini** said: *"Millions of people – men, women and children – depend on UNRWA for vital services: education, healthcare and social services, humanitarian assistance and employment. Supporting UNRWA is a humanitarian and political duty. It is in our collective interest of building peace and security in the Middle East and for the prospects of a negotiated two-state solution. I have shared this message of urgency with our partners participating in today's meeting in Rome, dedicated to UNRWA's funding crisis. As the Agency faces difficult times, we are – and we will continue to be – strong, consistent and reliable supporters of its work".*

Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, stated: "*Today's substantial contribution reaffirms the European Union's longstanding commitment to support UNRWA's work providing basic services to Palestine refugees. We are advancing our payment for financial support to UNRWA for 2018, worth €82 million, as the Agency is facing critical moments. UNRWA needs to receive adequate and predictable resources, and I am happy to confirm that the EU will maintain its high level of contribution in both 2019 and 2020. We are working with the Agency on restructuring and reform, but its core tasks remain essential."*

In 2016 and 2017, the EU and its Member States together provided €424 million and €391 million respectively to UNRWA, making the European Union by far the largest and most reliable donor to the Agency. Today's €82 million support is allocated as a part of the EU's regular annual contribution for 2018, and has been made available through a sped-up procedure.

Extraordinary Ministerial Conference on UNRWA

The €82 million in funding was announced today during a meeting between High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** and UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl in the margins of the extraordinary UNRWA Ministerial Conference in Rome. The Conference focussed on solving the acute funding crisis the Agency is facing and on moving forward necessary Agency reforms.

Background

Since 1971, the strategic partnership between the European Union and UNRWA has been based on the shared objective of supporting the human development, humanitarian and protection needs of Palestine refugees and to promoting stability in the Middle East.

In June 2017, the EU and UNRWA signed a "2017-2020 Joint Declaration", strengthening the political nature of their partnership and reaffirming the European Union's commitment to promoting the rights of Palestine refugees. The Declaration also confirms the EU's support for the long-term financial stability of the Agency in a context of intensified budgetary constraints and operational challenges.

The impact of UNRWA's funding crisis is particularly acute in the Gaza Strip where the EU's engagement is strongly focussed on creating better perspectives for the Palestinian people.

To help meet the most immediate challenge in Gaza, which is the absence of necessary drinking water, the EU will host a pledging conference on the **Gaza Central Desalination Plant** on 20 March in Brussels. This will be the occasion to rally the support of the international community for an investment of €560 million to provide water to two million Palestinians, meeting their humanitarian needs as well as contributing to the economic development of Gaza.

The EU will also host the annual spring meeting of the international donor coordination group in support of the Palestinian economy, the **Ad Hoc Liaison Committee** (AHLC), in Brussels on 20 March 2018. Since 1993 the AHLC has served as a key policy-level coordination mechanism for financial assistance to the Palestinian people, with a purpose of preserving the vision of a negotiated two-state solution.

For More Information

EU cooperation with Palestine

The Office of the European Union Representative (West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNRWA)

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)