PRESS RELEASE

Turkish President expresses strong support to UNRWA in meeting with Commissioner-General



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Ankara

The President of the Republic of Turkey, His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdogan, today received Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl, to mark his strong support for the mandate and activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

This important meeting took place at a time when Palestine refugees face dramatic circumstances in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Mr. Krähenbühl highlighted the importance of standing for the rights and dignity of Palestine refugees and thanked President Ergodan for Turkey's historic solidarity and the robust increase of its support to UNRWA.

As it prepares to take over the important chairmanship of the UNRWA Advisory Commission in July 2018 and at a time when the Agency faces an unprecedented financial crisis, Turkey stepped forward with significant additional funding announced mid-March at an Extraordinary Ministerial Conference held in Rome. President Erdogan confirmed Turkey's steadfast determination to ensure that UNRWA is able to maintain its vital services in education, health-care and emergency relief.

The meeting with the President centered on Turkey's direct support to UNRWA and using its influence with other member states of the United Nations in creating new funding alliances. It further reviewed ways to mobilize the Turkish private sector to assist the Agency, particularly during the Holy Month of Ramadan and as part of long-term partnerships.

President Erdogan said: "Turkey is deeply committed to the United Nations and will spare no efforts in supporting Palestine refugees. We will stand with UNRWA at this delicate time and mobilize our national mechanisms to support its "Dignity is Priceless" campaign during Ramadan. We will also continue to call on the international community, including the member states of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation to increase their funding for UNRWA."

Commissioner-General Krähenbühl thanked the President for his invaluable commitment to UNRWA: "This meeting is a source of great encouragement. UNRWA services for 526'000 students and millions of Palestine refugees must be preserved. They provide hope, a preservation of dignity and opportunity and I am very grateful for the President's strong affirmation of Turkey's engagement to help the Agency overcome its current crisis and stabilize its long-term financial situation".

UNRWA has faced an unexpected and unprecedented $446 M financial shortfall in 2018, following the decision of one of its main donors to significantly reduce its contribution. Since then, the Agency has successfully mobilized nearly half of the amount needed, notably by means of an active diversification of its partnerships and as a result of strong international solidarity.

The Agency's situation remains very dire however and additional efforts are urgently needed to sustain critical services for Palestine refugees in a most

unstable region. In this context, Turkey has significantly increased its direct contribution to UNRWA, adding $10 million to the Agency's core programs and announcing 26'000 MTs of flour as part of the assistance to 1 million Palestine refugees in Gaza.

The keen interest of Turkey to actively mobilize the private sector in support of UNRWA's #DignityIsPriceless campaign is an important and promising additional milestone. A founding member of UNRWA's Advisory Commission in 1949, Turkey has always been a valued partner. The meeting with President Ergodan underscores the growing strategic nature of this partnership.

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UNRWA
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 5.4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA across its five fields of operation. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank, including East Jerusalem 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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