Belgium raises UNRWA contributions to let schools reopen after the summer holidays

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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Development Cooperation Alexander De Croo has decided to grant an additional € 4 million in humanitarian aid to UNRWA, the UN agency responsible for distributing humanitarian aid to more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East. This new support brings Belgian aid to the UNRWA to more than € 11 million this year. With this support, Belgium wants UNRWA schools to reopen their doors to more than half a million Palestinian children after the summer holidays.

Alexander De Croo: "*The right to quality education for every child is of crucial importance to Belgium. It is not an option to keep schools closed due to a lack of funding. With these additional funds, we hope that UNRWA can find a solution so that every Palestinian child in Gaza, the West bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, can go back to school in a few weeks*."

Cuts in the UNRWA budget as well as the Palestinian refugees' increasing poverty and vulnerability have led to a significant funding gap. Because of that, UNRWA schools threaten to stay closed for more than half a million Palestinian children. Besides keeping the schools open, Belgium also pleads for UNRWA to maintain investment in family planning and gender equality. Restricting the freedom of choice of girls and young women can never lead to a lasting solution to the current crisis, much to the contrary.

By the far the largest donor

Belgium recognizes that internal reforms have helped UNRWA to reduce its funding gap. In the coming months and years, UNRWA should focus even more on core activities like education and healthcare. New synergies must also be found with other actors who could offer solutions to the needs of the Palestinian refugees.

Together with other EU member states and the European Commission, Belgium is by far the largest contributor to UNRWA.