The European Union proposes additional €40 million for Palestine Refugees to keep schools and health clinics open

New York, 27 September 2018

Today, the Commission announced additional support to UNRWA to allow the agency to provide access to education for 500,000 Palestine refugee children, primary health care for more than 3.5 million patients and assistance to over 250,000 vulnerable Palestine refugees.

During the UNRWA Ministerial meeting on the margins of the UN Genral Assembly in New York, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica **Mogherini** said: *"Today we reaffirm the EU's political and financial support to UNRWA. With today's announcement the overall contribution of the EU and Member States has reached over €1 billion for the past three years. Thanks to these funds, every day 500,000 children go to school, millions of patients receive healthcare and thousands of people have access to jobs. Supporting the agency means supporting peace and security in the Middle East. And this is in our strategic interest. UNRWA is essential for the very perspective of a two-state solution. The EU is doing its part, all those who have cut funding would need to rethink their decision."*

Also present at the meeting, Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, stated: *"Keeping schools open for Palestine refugees is a key priority for all of us. With this additional funding we reaffirm the European Union's clear and firm commitment to UNRWA and Palestine refugees. This is an exceptional response to an exceptional crisis. It now matters to plan for 2019 and beyond. UNRWA needs now to focus on core services to the most vulnerable and to urgently align its activities to available funding. We stand ready to help UNRWA and to work with host governments to manage the process."*

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid & Crisis Management, Christos ***Stylianides*** *added: "Our additional humanitarian assistance will help UNRWA respond to health needs which have increased significantly over the past six months in Gaza. This will strengthen the healthcare system and help UNRWA-run primary healthcare centres in Gaza meet increased demands. We remain committed to assisting the most vulnerable people in Gaza and to strengthening the resilience of the most affected communities."*

The European Union has long since been the largest and most reliable donor to the agency. This additional support for 2018 brings the overall European Commission contribution to UNRWA's activities in 2018 to €146 million. For the three years 2016, 2017 and 2018, the total contribution of the EU and its Member States combined has reached approximately €1.2 billion. The EU also works with UNRWA to take forward internal reforms to secure a sound and sustainable financial basis, which includes focusing on core services to the most vulnerable.

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 confirmed 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.

In addition to its participation to the UNRWA Ministerial meeting in New York on 27 September, the EU will also be represented by High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini and Commissioner Hahn at the annual autumn meeting of the international donor coordination group in support of the Palestinian economy, the **Ad Hoc Liaison Committee** (AHLC), in New York on the same day. 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

EU humanitarian assistance in Palestine

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

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