Press Release

The European Union Announces a Vital EUR 82 Million Contribution to UNRWA



UNRWA Commissioner General Pierre Krähebühl (left) and EU Representative Ralph Tarraf (right) shake hands after signing the EU-UNRWA contribution agreement of EUR 82 million at UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem on 27 February 2019. © 2019 UNRWA Photo by Marwan Baghdadi

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East Jerusalem

The European Union Representative, Ralph Tarraf, and Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Pierre Krähenbühl, signed at UNRWA headquarters in East Jerusalem the EU-UNRWA contribution agreement in support of the Agency's 2019 Programme Budget.

Under this agreement, the EU provides a vital contribution of EUR 82 million in support of the human development work of UNRWA for this year. In light of the Agency's ongoing financial challenges, the EU has agreed to provide the totality of its funding immediately upon the signature of the agreement.

The new contribution will help preserve access to education for 532,000 children, provide primary health care for more than 3.5 million patients and assistance to over 250,000 acutely vulnerable Palestine refugees, as well as a multitude of other services, at a time of extreme instability across the Middle East region.

For over four decades, the European Union has established itself as a key strategic partner for the Agency, supporting UNRWA in its efforts to help Palestine refugees achieve their full potential in human development despite their difficult circumstances. In 2018, as the Agency faced its most significant financial shortfall since its inception, the EU emerged as the Agency's largest donor. Building on decades of commitment and partnership, the EU has maintained its generous level of support to assist Palestine refugees.

"We greatly value the outstanding commitment shown by the European Union to preserving the dignity and addressing the needs of Palestine refugees", said Pierre Krähenbühl. "The generosity and consistency of the EU's cooperation deserves the highest recognition. It allowed UNRWA to open its schools on time for the 2018-2019 scholastic year and was a major factor in last year's successful campaign to overcome our existential funding crisis. We are proud of this partnership and look forward to developing it further at this critical time", he added.

The EU Representative in Jerusalem Ralph Tarraf said: "On a daily basis, UNRWA provides Palestine refugees with essential services including education, health and relief assistance, while promoting socio-economic development and stability in the Middle East. The EU and its Member States are proud to support UNRWA's work in providing these services to Palestine refugees, which should be seen as an inseparable part of the EU's efforts to reach a negotiated two-state solution and a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Supporting UNRWA will remain one of the pillars of our Middle East peace policy."

The EU's commitment to Palestine refugees includes unprecedented support for the Agency's education programme through its *Healthy Living, Healthy Spaces* campaign. In 2018 alone, the EU rehabilitated some 65 UNRWA installations, including schools and health centres across the Middle East.

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EU AND UNRWA: TOGETHER FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES

Since 1971, the European Union and UNRWA have maintained a strategic partnership governed by the shared objective to support the human development, humanitarian and protection needs of Palestine refugees and promote stability in the Middle East. Today, the European Union is the largest multilateral provider of international assistance to Palestine refugees. This reliable and predictable support from the European Union enables UNRWA to provide core services to more than 5.4 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, including quality education for roughly half a million children and primary health care for more than 3.5 million patients. Collectively, the EU and its Member States are also among the largest contributors to the Agency's humanitarian emergency appeals and projects in response to various crises and specific needs across the region. The partnership between the European Union and UNRWA has allowed millions of Palestine refugees to be better educated, live healthier lives, access employment opportunities and improve their living conditions, thus contributing to the development of the entire region.

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 5.4 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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