Press Release

Afghanistan's historic contribution to UNRWA is "a message in golden letters" says UNRWA Commissioner-General



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The government of Afghanistan has contributed $1 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

H. E Abdul Rahim Sayed Jan, Ambassador of Afghanistan to Turkey handed his country's donation to Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Pierre Krähenbühl, during a ceremony hosted by Turkey's Foreign Minister H.E Mevlut Çavusoglu, in the presence of the Palestinian Foreign Minister H.E Riad Al-Malki in Istanbul on 3 March.

In expressing his gratitude to Afghanistan, UNRWA's Commissioner-General described this donation as an "immense gesture of great dignity" at a time when Afghanistan faces many challenges and its people still endure the consequences of decades of war. "The Afghan decision to support Palestine refugees will be written in golden letters in the history of UNRWA," said Mr. Krähenbühl. "This is a message that we will carry around the world to inspire others to stand firmly with Palestine refugees. It is a symbol that the world has not forgotten them."

The Ambassador of Afghanistan to Turkey reiterated his country's "historic position on Palestine," which made "the decision to fund UNRWA very important one ."

This contribution by Afghanistan carries a strong message of commitment and solidarity from a country whose people has long suffered wars and hardship. It coincides with the recent establishment of a Developmental Waqf Fund for Palestine refugees, adopted at the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Abu Dhabi last week.

On that occasion, Commissioner-General Krähenbühl met with H.E. Salahuddin Rabbani, the Foreign Minister of Afghanistan and expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the remarkable decision to support UNRWA.

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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.

For more information, please contact:

Sami Mshasha
Director of Communications, Arabic Language Spokesperson
Mobile: +972 (0)54 216 8295
Office: +972 (0)2 589 0724
s.mshasha@unrwa.org