Press Release

UNRWA Appoints Acting Deputy Commissioner-General

1 August 2019
East Jerusalem

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is pleased to announce that, following official communication by the office of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and consultations with the Agency and with the Department of Operational Support, Christian Saunders has been appointed as acting Deputy Commissioner-General (DCG), pending the recruitment of a full replacement to the outgoing DCG Sandra Mitchell.

This rapid appointment is the result of active liaison in the last few days between UNRWA and the United Nations Secretariat and a strong sign of the commitment of the Secretary-General's support to the Agency and, to ensure uninterrupted services for Palestine Refugees, in particular opening the schools on time, mobilization of funding and the renewal of UNRWA's mandate.

Mr Saunders is currently Assistant Secretary-General for Supply-Chain Management at the Department of Operational Support in New York. As part of a distinguished 30-year career, Mr Saunders also held positions such as Director of the Office of the USG for Management. He has significant humanitarian and field experience, having begun his UN career in 1989 with UNRWA in Gaza. He also served in other UNRWA postings, as well as with UNFPA and UNHCR.

UNRWA takes this opportunity to reiterate its appreciation and respect for the service and dedication shown by outgoing DCG Sandra Mitchell.

- Ends –

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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