



#DIGNITYISPRICELESS CAMPAIGN

Briefing - Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA, 25 June 2018

The Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly (GA) for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA met on 25 June 2018, at the Trusteeship Council Chamber of the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The conference, established by GA Resolution 1729, was the primary forum for the announcement by Member States of their financial support for UNRWA, in solidarity with Palestine refugees. The Conference was attended by officials from more than seventy Member States, as well as international organizations partnering with UNRWA and members of civil society. Opening remarks were made by UN Secretary General António Guterres, President of the UN General Assembly Miroslav Lajčák, and UNRWA Commissioner General Pierre Krähenbühl. These were followed by statements by Member States¹.

UNRWA, established by the General Assembly in 1949 as a temporary relief agency, provides humanitarian and development services to Palestine refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Since then, UNRWA has been renewed and expanded, with the full support from the United Nations and its member states. 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 microfinance². Today, UNRWA's annual budget exceeds half a billion dollars. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions by Member States and is currently operating with a \$250 million shortfall due to a significant reduction in funding from the US administration.

This year's meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee addressed the remaining shortfall of US\$ 250 million, which threatens and affects vital UNRWA services. UN Member States expressed strong political support for UNRWA, its mandate and staff, and its critical services to Palestine refugees. In light of this situation, Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner General for UNRWA, on the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions, "in the absence of new funding, we will have to take drastic measures as an Agency. This means food assistance and psycho-social support are at immediate risk of being cut"³. The Conference saw additional pledges to UNRWA as part of an international effort to address the Agency's funding shortfall, and to sustain its vital services. Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, stressed UNRWA's mission as "millions of Palestine refugees are counting on us to relieve their suffering & to help them to build a better future. They are counting on us for action now [...] The outstanding work of UNRWA has an immediate effect by meeting the urgent humanitarian needs of millions of Palestine refugees. At the same time, its work provides a foundation for hope and dignity, serving as a critical conflict prevention mechanism, in a turbulent region"⁴. While Miroslav Lajčák, General Assembly President, stated that "the shortfall is too high and the future is still too uncertain, not just for UNRWA, but also for the communities and children who depend on it. The agency has "Relief" in its name, and I call on us all to think about it"⁵.

20 donors have announced their contributions at the Conference, in order to bridge the gap in funding for UNRWA⁶.

DONORS - confirmed pledges	Amounts
Switzerland	CHF 19 million
Turkey	\$1.5 million
Sweden	\$250 million over four years
Austria	€400,000
India	\$5 million
European Union	€106 million
Belgium	22.75 million for 2018, with an additional €5 million for an UNRWA education programme
Mexico	\$500,000
Kuwait	\$8 million
Estonia	€200,000
Japan	beyond its annual contribution, pledged an additional \$10 million in April and an additional \$5 million for food assistance
Malta	€105,000 in 2018
Cyprus	\$50,000
United Kingdom	\$51 million
Ireland	€4.25 million plus an additional €1.5 million for humanitarian assistance
Australia	\$80 million for 2016-2020
United Arab Emirates	\$50 million for an UNRWA educational programme as well as \$15 million for the upcoming school year
Indonesia	\$200,000
Italy	€6.8 million, €5 million for projects in Lebanon
The Holy See	\$100,000



The conference hashtags are #DignityIsPriceless and #ForPalestineRefugees.

All pictures from www.unrwa.org

Delegations indicated pledges - pending approval	Amounts
Austria	€1 million to a UNRWA health programme
Germany	unspecified contribution to the World Bank Trust Fund

The delegations of Qatar, Canada and Norway also drew attention to the contributions they had made during a pledging conference held in March 2018. Further support for UNWRA was expressed by the representatives of the Russian Federation, Brazil, Netherlands, Egypt, Jordan, France, Malaysia, Lebanon, China and Norway with no specific pledges announced⁶.

The Conference was indeed a very positive event sustaining momentum in addressing UNRWA's remaining shortfall. The Commissioner-General thanked Member States for their support, particularly those who had made additional contributions already in 2018.

(Endnotes)

1 <http://www.unic-eg.org/eng/28573>

2 <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/%E2%80%9Cstrong-support-unrwa-its-annual-pledging-conference%E2%80%9D>

3 <http://webtv.un.org/search/press-briefing-by-pierre-kr%C3%A4henb%C3%BChl-unrwa-on-the-ad-hoc-committee-of-the-general-assembly-for-the-announcement-of-voluntary-contributions/5801680150001/?term=&lan=english&page=2>

4 <http://webtv.un.org/watch/ant%C3%B3nio-guterres-un-secretary-general-at-the-ad-hoc-committee-of-the-general-assembly-for-the-announcement-of-voluntary-contributions-to-unrwa/5801723920001/>

5 <http://webtv.un.org/watch/miroslav-laj%C4%8D%C3%A1k-general-assembly-president-at-the-ad-hoc-committee-of-the-general-assembly-for-the-announcement-of-voluntary-contributions-to-unrwa/5801724722001/>

6 <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/20-donors-announce-contributions-pledging-conference-bridge>



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