

# Joint Declaration

## between the European Union and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on European Union support to UNRWA (2017-2020)

CONSIDERING the EU Council Conclusions of December 2009, reiterated in December 2010 and July 2014 as well as the EU statement at the UN Security Council on 21 April 2011 and again on 13 February 2013; which set out the EU's views on the key parameters, principles and issues on the Israel-Arab conflict and in particular where the EU calls for an "agreed, just and fair solution to the refugee question" and states that a "negotiated settlement must allow the two States to live side by side in peace and security";

CONSIDERING FURTHER, the EU's continuing support to UNRWA is a key element in the EU strategy of contributing to the promotion of stability in the Near East which facilitates the parties' quest for peace, noting that:

- UNRWA's work helps ensure that the essential needs for the well-being, protection and human development of the Palestine refugees are met within its five fields of operation;
- UNRWA ameliorates the plight of Palestine refugees through the provision of education, health, relief and social services and ongoing work in the areas of infrastructure and camp improvement, microfinance, protection and emergency assistance. Its work supports generations of Palestine refugees. A future independent Palestinian state needs educated, skilled and healthy citizens in order to deliver peace, security and prosperity for all;
- UNRWA's work provides political space for the efforts to conclude a peace deal and state building.

RECOGNISING the contribution of UNRWA in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind, and to endeavour to reach those furthest behind first, must apply equally to the people affected by humanitarian crises, including Palestine refugees;

APPRECIATING UNRWA's crucial contribution through vital services to the maintenance of security, stability and development in the region;

ACKNOWLEDGING that since 1971, the EU has been providing reliable and predictable support to the Palestine refugees through UNRWA's Programme Budget, special projects and emergency appeals and constitutes the largest multilateral provider of international assistance to Palestine refugees;

RECOGNISING the positive and essential impact of the EU's support to UNRWA in sectors such as education, health, social development, poverty alleviation, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and rehabilitation, youth and employment;

RECOGNISING that UNRWA is implementing its humanitarian, developmental and protection mandate against a backdrop of extraordinary operational challenges;

RECOGNISING increasing levels of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and vulnerability amongst Palestine refugees across all fields of UNRWA's operations and the increasing pressure on UNRWA and other actors to respond to those needs;

RECOGNISING the high cost of the courage and resolve of UNRWA's staff: 11 Agency personnel killed in the 50-day hostilities in Gaza in July and August 2014, 16 killed and 27 missing, detained, or kidnapped in Syria since the start of the ongoing armed conflict;

RECOGNISING the need, in close cooperation with UN member states including Advisory Commission members including UNRWA's host and donor partners, to put the Agency on a more stable financial footing, and commending UNRWA for the considerable consultative efforts made with all stakeholders in 2013–2015 to develop a Medium Term Strategy (MTS) for 2016–2021 that identifies strategic operational priorities for the Agency and areas in which the potential exists to shift the burden of responding to needs from UNRWA to other actors who have a comparative advantage in the delivery of results;

NOTING that the MTS for 2016-2021 presents the Agency's statement of intent for its operations over this period, and reflects a strategy designed to be applicable in any security context, capturing the unique character of UNRWA, which has the ability to operate in diverse contexts, including the most intense and violent conflicts;

RECOGNISING efforts underway within UNRWA to establish and further develop strategic partnerships with other international, national and community partners for the benefit of Palestine refugees particularly in areas in which other actors have a comparative operational strength;

RECOGNISING UNRWA's ability to combine emergency and human development modes of action;

RECOGNISING and commending UNRWA for on-going efforts made to increase the cost effectiveness of its programmes by directing as much of its available resources as possible towards interventions aimed at delivery of tangible strategic results as defined in the Agency's MTS 2016–2021;

RECOGNISING efforts made to strengthen planning and budgeting processes and controls in 2015 to generate, for 2016, a budget that represents zero-growth vis-à-vis 2015 in spite of increases in refugee numbers, students, and the price of commodities and services;

RECOGNISING that the repeated threat of financial deficits for the Agency's core operations are unsustainable and a costly distraction for all concerned and threatening the very same stability in the region and human development achievements that donors have been supporting;

COMMENDING UNRWA's engagement and commitment to a process of comprehensive management reforms and successive measures towards organisational development and sustaining institutional change. UNRWA has, amongst other things, introduced major reforms in education and health and continues to improve reporting, financial management, strategic planning and programme cycle management.

Additionally, UNRWA has embarked upon enhanced resource mobilisation to diversify donors. The Agency has also re-engineered key processes to increase transparency, effectiveness in programme delivery, cost efficiency and decision making processes;

RECOGNISING the importance of key support to core services, comprehensiveness, predictability, continuity, real value of the contributions, and joint commitments, which are vital for UNRWA's effectiveness and should be safeguarded as essential pillars of the partnership between UNRWA and the EU;

RECOGNISING that this Joint Declaration will be another pillar in the relationship between UNRWA and the EU which should help equip the Agency to respond to the challenges up to 2020;

CONSIDERING that this Joint Declaration does not intend to create any legal obligations on either side under domestic or international law.

Therefore,

For its part, the European Union intends to:

Assist UNRWA in securing financial resources to enable the Agency to implement the mandate given by the United Nations General Assembly, to operate on a sustainable and cost-effective basis and to ensure the quality and level of services provided to Palestine refugees, thus continuing its resolute partnership with the Agency.

To maximize the impact of the EU support to the Agency, this assistance may take the form of:

I. A core contribution to UNRWA's Programme Budget

Based on the past years' EU contribution to UNRWA's Programme Budget and in recognition of the growing and evolving needs of Palestine refugees, the EU intends to continue providing financial support to UNRWA's Programme Budget similar to previous years. This is subject to the availability of funds on the relevant budget line.

II. Complementary contributions:

The European Union may examine other options in support of UNRWA's programmes and fields of operations and in response to *ad hoc* needs not targeted by the Agency's Programme Budget. These instruments include notably the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, Humanitarian Aid, when appropriate to cover needs in line with the EU humanitarian needs-based and principled approach, and the Development Cooperation Instrument.

In consultation with host countries, this may include taking into consideration ENI bilateral allocations. *Ad hoc* projects could be supported only insofar as they are time-bound, specific and when duly justified and necessary, bearing in mind their consequences on UNRWA's Programme Budget.

In the event of complementary contributions, the EU should prioritise support to the Programme Budget.

Contributions from the EU Budget to UNRWA's Programme Budget should be made in accordance with the provisions of the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement and its Addendum signed between the European Union and the United Nations on 29 April 2003 and on 28 February 2014 respectively, and should be in compliance with the EU Financial Regulation.

Consistent with the EU Financial Regulation, UNRWA's regulatory framework, international best practices and good humanitarian donor-ship practice where ad-hoc projects will be funded, Project Support Costs (indirect costs/remuneration) may be charged to the EU contribution. Such costs will not be charged to EU contributions to the Programme Budget.

### III. Strengthened political partnership

This assistance is expected to:

- a) Use the EU's good offices with host countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Palestinian Authority) to support UNRWA's internal reform process;
- b) Use the EU's bilateral dialogues at the highest level with fellow donors, in particular Gulf countries, to discuss political and financial support to UNRWA;
- c) Contribute to the improvement of the respect for the rights of Palestine refugees by host countries and Israel and propose including the Palestine refugee dimension, where possible, in Council Conclusions, EU statements, Human Rights and European Neighbourhood Policy reference documents/papers and dialogues (reports, Action Plans and others).

For its part, UNRWA intends to:

I. Ensure the fulfilment of the EU's contractual requirements particularly with regards to timely and accurate programmatic and financial reporting, as well as monitoring and evaluation functions of the EU's support to the Agency, in accordance with the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement and the Agency's Regulatory Framework and in compliance with the EU Financial Regulation.

II. Within the process of implementing UNRWA's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2016-2021 and the importance of this process in relation to UNRWA's strategic direction, UNRWA envisages to:

1. Preserve and prioritise core functions including basic education, primary health, relief and social services and protection.
2. Advance and institutionalise the Agency's reforms foreseen under the 2016-2021 MTS.
3. Enhance communication with all stakeholders (donors, host countries/authority, staff and refugees) with the aim of advancing the Agency's broad reforms and building beneficiaries' trust in UNRWA.
4. Sustain internal measures aimed at containing costs and achieving further efficiency gains while pursuing other areas where efficiencies may be possible.

5. Continue to address and manage major cost drivers to ensure the fulfilment of MTS objectives.
6. Weigh future strategic undertakings and ventures carefully, always prioritising and preserving the quality and the delivery of core functions in line with the MTS 2016-2021.
7. Advance partnerships for the engagement of international partner organisations to help address the increasing needs of Palestine refugees while easing the burden on UNRWA's budgets.
8. Ensure that humanitarian operations, outside core functions, remain focused and targeted particularly in protracted crisis situations.

III. Continue its significant reform efforts to improve its management structure, results-based budgeting and strategic planning and keep the EU regularly informed about the progress and savings made.

IV. Continue its efforts towards enhanced transparency, accountability, internal oversight, evaluation, strengthened and improved management of financial and human resources, innovation in programme implementation, and resource mobilization.

V. Continue to ensure better transparency and complementarity of all UNRWA programmes and projects in the region.

VI. Continue its efforts in burden sharing and broadening of its donor base particularly among regional donors and influential global stakeholders in line with the UNRWA Resource Mobilization Strategy for 2016-2018 developed in full alignment with the MTS 2016-2021.

VII. Ensure maximum visibility of EU financial support to the Agency, including by specific visibility initiatives and activities with the character of a sponsorship arrangement, designed in such a way that it is clear EU funds have been used, that are related to the delivery of UNRWA core services.

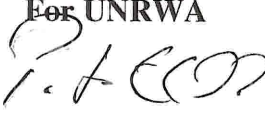
VIII. Enhance cooperation with the hosts including the Palestinian Authority, on programmatic policy matters to safeguard and improve harmonisation of approaches and complementarity of interventions until a just and durable solution of the question of Palestine refugees has been found.

Both sides intend to continue to coordinate and share information, including by holding an annual strategic dialogue session at a venue to be agreed between the sides (in Brussels or in one of UNRWA's area of operations) at a senior level to ensure better coordination and understanding between both institutions, and to take stock of the above, update on the operational and financial impact of reforms on UNRWA, analyse the challenges, coordinate the following year and assess any possible need for specific operations.

Signed in Brussels on 7 June 2017.

For the European Union  
  
Federica Mogherini

  
Johannes Hahn

For UNRWA  
  
Pierre Krähenbühl

Annex:

In reference to the Middle East and in particular the protracted Arab-Israeli Conflict, the European Union's (EU) financial support to the Palestinian people including Palestine refugees across the region continues to be governed by the EU's overarching objective to implement the two-state solution and the creation of a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living in peace and security with the State of Israel.

UNRWA was established by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949 to carry out direct relief and works programmes for Palestine refugees. The Agency began operations on 1 May 1950.

UNRWA's contemporary mandate is to provide assistance and protection to a population of some 5.2 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to achieve their full potential in human development pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA's services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, microfinance, protection and emergency assistance. UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions. The Agency is unique in terms of its long-standing commitment to one group of refugees, and its direct contribution to the welfare and human development of four generations of Palestine refugees.

Pending the just resolution of the question of Palestine refugees, the UNGA has continued to emphasize (most recently in GA Resolutions 70/83, 70/84 and 70/85, of 2015) the necessity for the continuation of the work of the Agency and the essential role that UNRWA has been playing for over sixty-five years in providing vital services to Palestine refugees. The UNGA has also reiterated the recognition of UNRWA's work and the importance of its unimpeded operations and its provision of services for the well-being, protection and human development of the Palestine refugees and for the stability of the region. Affirming the necessity for the continuation of UNRWA's work, the UNGA has renewed UNRWA's mandate repeatedly (most recently until 30 June 2020).