



## **The Advisory Commission of UNRWA opens first regular session**

Amman – The first substantive session of the Advisory Commission opened on 19 June with the participation of 23 members and observers. The session was chaired by Ms. Rana Mokaddem, Head of Palestine section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lebanon.

In her introductory statement, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Karen Koning AbuZayd, thanked the chairperson for her leadership and dedication as well as welcoming the incoming chairperson from the Netherlands and incoming Vice-Chairperson from Syria who will begin their 12 month tenure on 1 July 2006.

In her statement, the Commissioner-General provided an overview of the challenges facing the Agency in the occupied Palestinian territory. In particular, Mrs. AbuZayd said: "since our last meeting in February, the security and humanitarian situation of Palestine refugee families in the occupied Palestinian territory has further deteriorated. In response, UNRWA has launched an emergency appeal to meet the immediate needs of Palestine refugees. UNRWA is committed to providing the services prescribed by its mandate for as long as the political and financial support of the international community is forthcoming and security conditions allow".

During the afternoon session, members and observers discussed the situation of Palestine refugees in Lebanon. Following a presentation by UNRWA's field director in Lebanon, Mr. Richard Cook, and a briefing by the delegation of Lebanon, the members of the Advisory Commission welcomed the enhanced cooperation between the government of Lebanon and UNRWA to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees. Several countries indicated that they would provide support to the camp improvement programme presented by UNRWA.

Tomorrow, members and observers will discuss the Agency's management reform initiative about which a comprehensive presentation will be made by the Deputy Commissioner-General Mr. Filippo Grandi. In addition, a presentation will be made by the directors of operations for the West Bank and Gaza Mr. Anders Fange and Mr. John Ging on the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Advisory Commission was established under the same General Assembly resolution as UNRWA itself, 302(IV) of 8 December 1949 to advise and assist the Commissioner-General of UNRWA in the execution of the programme. On 9 November 2005, the General Assembly approved an increase in the membership of the Advisory Commission to include Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, whose contributions to the Agency have exceeded an annual average of \$5 millions over the past three years.

The General Assembly also invited Palestine to attend and fully participate in the meetings as an observer, and invited the European Community and the League of Arab States to attend as observers.

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