

26 September 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,
President of the 70th Session of the General Assembly,
at the UNRWA High Level Ministerial Meeting on the Financial
Sustainability**

Honourable Ministers, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to you all.

Let me begin by thanking Minister Judeh and Minister Wallstrom for showing leadership and chairing this important meeting. Thank you also to the Ministers with us and to all other participants for coming together today.

At this historic Summit, we have been discussing the transformative change which we hope to happen in our world over the next fifteen years. Key to this will be action, partnership and leadership in the first few years so that early progress can be secured.

And there can be no better example of the need for urgent action and early progress than in relation to the future financial stability of UNRWA.

As President of the General Assembly, the UN body from where UNRWA's mandate originates, I see it as my task to ensure that everything possible is done to ensure that UNRWA's mandate is carried out, until a political settlement between Israel and Palestine is reached.

As the United Nations, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that UNRWA's core programmes foreseen in that mandate – education, health, relief and social services – are delivered to the Palestinian refugees in the most efficient manner.

In the Middle East for over 65 years now, UNRWA has served as a pillar of stability for a registered population of some 5 million Palestinian refugees. Thanks to the support of the donors and hosts represented in this room, UNRWA has supported the human development of Palestinian women, men and children and ensured their protection. In recent years, UNRWA has, in addition, been called upon to manage crises of varying intensity in each of its five fields of operation. It does so in a region which, as you are all only too aware, is struggling with a series of other crises.

We will hear today about UNRWA's strategy going forward to deal with its financial challenges and why donor's and host countries' sustained support is indispensable. It is also important that the rest of the GA be fully apprised of UNRWA's situation.

I welcome therefore that the Agency has decided to bring forward this year's Pledging Conference to 8 October, at which I intend to be present.

Moreover, it is imperative to start today to actively explore measures that will result in a decisive change towards more sustainable funding of the Agency's operations.

As Members and Observers of the UN, we know that UNRWA cannot be expected to fulfil its mandate without systematic financial and political support from the international community. While the gap between humanitarian needs and funding continues to grow, abandoning Palestinian refugees to hopelessness will only expose them to even greater suffering. Equally, abandoning their hosts to manage the situation on their own will only result in further regional destabilization and greater security concerns.

The 2030 Agenda, which Heads of State and Government adopted on Friday, commits to leaving no-one behind. Crucially, it also includes a commitment to reach those furthest behind first.

To do so, we must begin by fulfilling our collective responsibilities in relation to UNRWA.

Thank you.