

9 October 2015

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft,  
President of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the  
Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome to this crucial meeting on financing UNRWA.

At the outset, let me welcome Ms. Sandra Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner General of UNRWA, for her first address to this Committee.

Ladies and gentlemen, in August this year at the peak of the UNRWA funding crisis, the Agency's Commissioner-General issued a Special Report to the General Assembly. That report outlined the dramatic scale of UNRWA's funding shortfall, the efforts made to secure funding and the measures taken to maintain critical UNRWA services.

The report noted that, as at 3 August 2015, UNRWA lacked the funds needed for its more than 685 schools which provide education for some 500,000 Palestine refugee boys and girls in its five fields of operation. It also lacked the funds needed for its eight vocational training centers which provide training for some 7,000 young people.

The threat to UNRWA's landmark education programme not only put at risk the Agency's core mandate given by this Assembly in 1949 but it imperiled the future of half a million Palestine refugee children.

Thankfully, and due to the generosity of a number of countries including Arab and particularly Gulf states, as well as other traditional donors, UNRWA has pulled through this crisis. On behalf the UN General Assembly, I wish to express my gratitude to these countries for their support and indeed to all of UNRWA's longstanding donors.

Today's meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee, however, seeks to arrest the long-term deteriorating financial health of UNRWA and to put the Agency on a more stable financial footing. The rationale for doing so is abundantly clear and has been outlined by the Working Group of the Financing of UNRWA, chaired by Turkey.

Firstly, in the absence of a much needed political solution to the plight of Palestine Refugees, UNRWA must continue to provide human development and humanitarian services to this community of 5.2 million people. This is roughly the population of my own

country Denmark. But unlike UNRWA, Denmark does not have to rely on goodwill and voluntary contributions from other countries, to meet the basic needs of its people.

Secondly, let us all remember that against the backdrop of a broader global refugee crisis, unrest in the Middle East, devastation caused by the Syria conflict, recent clashes in Jerusalem and the West Bank and the slow pace of the Gaza reconstruction, now is not the time to reduce our support to some 5.2million of that same region's most vulnerable people. On the contrary, now is the time to increase our commitment!

Bearing this in mind, last week's High Level Ministerial meeting on the financial sustainability of UNRWA, co-hosted by Jordan and Sweden, was very encouraging. Taking stock of the challenges faced by the Agency today and the need for a longer term and sustainable solution to its recurrent financial shortfalls., I detected an overwhelming groundswell of support for the Agency at that meeting. Now, however, we must turn this moral support into concrete measures.

Two sets of actions can be taken in this regard.

First, UNRWA has embarked on a wide range of reforms designed to make it more effective and efficient. I am sure that Ms Mitchell will outline these measures in more detail.

Second, governments can make pledges which will back these reforms and contribute to creating a more stable basis for the Agency's operations.

I am aware that some of you may not yet be in a position to pledge financial support to UNRWA for the coming year, due to the need to complete budgetary processes. At the same time, however, today we can lay the foundations for a new era for this Agency, which will enable it to fully implement its mandate vis-à-vis the Palestine refugees.

Ladies and gentlemen, having established UNRWA in 1950, it remains the collective responsibility of the international community to ensure that that Agency and Palestine Refugees continue to receive our support.

Less than two weeks ago, world leaders committed to meeting the SDGs, and most importantly, to leaving no-one behind. That promise applies to all vulnerable groups including the Palestine Refugees. It is in their interest and the interest of wider regional and global stability that this community is provided with the necessary support.

I thank you.