



EU and UNRWA sign new Joint Declaration marking 50 years of Strategic Partnership

Brussels, 17 November 2021

Today, Josep **Borrell**, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission; Olivér **Várhelyi**, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement and Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner-General, signed a Joint Declaration on the EU's support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for the period 2021-2024.

The renewal of this agreement marks 50 years of EU-UNRWA partnership. In the Joint Declaration, the European Union commits to continue supporting UNRWA politically and in securing predictable, multi-annual financial resources to enable the Agency to fulfill its mandate and provide its essential services to Palestinian refugees. This includes quality education for more than half a million children, primary health care services for 3.5 million patients and essential assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable persons. For its part, UNRWA reiterates its commitment to neutrality, efficiency and transparency, and to its continued reforms and modernisation efforts, discussed at the International Conference in support of the Agency on 16 November.

High Representative Josep **Borrell** said: *"UNRWA has played an essential role in providing vital services to millions of Palestine refugees within its five fields of operation. The EU is determined to continue supporting the Agency both politically and financially, including by providing long-term reliability. Our support to UNRWA is a key element in our strategy of contributing to the promotion of security, stability and development in the region, which also helps to keep alive the prospects of sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians."*

Commissioner Olivér **Várhelyi** said: *"The EU remains a reliable and predictable partner and a top donor for UNRWA, most recently with €92 million contribution to help address the urgent cash-flow problems, including paying of staff salaries. We will continue to work with UNRWA to strengthen its governance for increased accountability, transparency & consistency with UN principles, including neutrality, and towards a more sustainable financing model. And we will promote quality education for Palestinian children and full compliance with UNESCO standards in education material."*

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini thanked the European Union for its long-standing commitment: *"For half a century, the EU has stood shoulder to shoulder with Palestine refugees, providing the necessary political and financial support to UNRWA, which continues to be instrumental in mitigating the impact of multiple regional crises and supporting the long-term human development of Palestine refugees. Together, we have contributed to one of the most remarkable human development processes in the Middle East and significantly advanced several key sustainable development goals for millions of Palestine refugees."*

Background

Since 1971, the European Union and UNRWA have maintained a strategic partnership governed by the shared objective to support the human development, humanitarian and protection needs of Palestine refugees and promote stability in the Middle East.

Today, the EU is the largest multilateral provider of international assistance to Palestine refugees. This reliable and predictable support enables UNRWA to provide core services to more than 5.8 million Palestine refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, including quality education for roughly half a million children and primary health care for more than 3.5 million patients.

Collectively, the EU and its Member States are also among the largest contributors to the Agency's humanitarian emergency appeals and projects in response to various crises and specific needs across the region. Their joint contribution amounted in 2021 to almost €356 million, around 40% of the total funding for UNRWA for this year.

The partnership between the European Union and UNRWA has allowed millions of Palestine refugees

to be better educated, live healthier lives, access employment opportunities and improve their living conditions, thus contributing to the development of the entire region.

For More Information

The text of the EU-UNRWA Joint Declaration can be found [here](#).

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