

STATEMENT BY DR.[MRS] KAKOLI GHOSH DASTIDAR, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON  
AGENDA ITEM 51 – UN RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN  
THE NEAR EAST' AT THE FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE 65<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 02, 2010

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to Mr. Flippo Grandi, Commissioner General of UNRWA for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East for the annual report on the extremely important work over the past year in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to commend the work of Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd, the outgoing Commissioner General who led the Agency for five years.



We also thank the UNRWA Advisory Committee and the members of the working group on the Financing of UNRWA, for their efforts in support of the work of UNRWA. India also places on record its admiration for the difficult and often risky work that UNRWA has carried out over the past six decades, placing service to the Palestinian refugees as its highest priority.

Mr. Chairman,

The services provided by UNRWA are of a critical importance in the context of the continuing violence in the Middle East. The Agency has played a key role in providing humanitarian assistance, including education, health care and social services to over 4.6 million Palestinian refugees. Today UNRWA is a symbol of the international community's commitment to the well-being of the Palestinian refugees until a just and durable settlement of the issue is achieved.

The report of Commissioner General, clearly illustrates the severe challenges UNRWA continues to face. As the report notes, several of the challenges directly impinge upon the well-being of Palestine refugees and the Agency's ability to efficiently and effectively discharge its humanitarian and development responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman,

The first of the challenges before UNRWA that needs to be addressed is the crisis of financing. The budgetary shortfall of UNRWA is growing, and this takes place at the same time as demands upon UNRWA for assistance and support have increased. Shortage of funds has direct implication on UNRWA work in general and projects like rebuilding of Nahr El Bared camp in particular. It also affects upgradation of services at several refugee camps. Therefore, there is a greater need for augmenting international efforts to improve UNRWA's financial health.

We note the concern of the Chairperson of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA that "the separation of barrier, closures, curfews and other restrictions on movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have led to further hardship for the affected population". As we have stated in the past, the walls/encroachment on Palestinian land and interests creates great hardships for the people affected by its construction and exacerbates the already grim situation.

An area of continuing concern is the restriction in freedom of movement of UNRWA staff members. Regrettably, the environment in which the Agency carries out its operations continues to hamper its ability to deliver services. Of equal concern is that these restrictions have had a serious impact on the ability of UNRWA to move staff and provide humanitarian assistance to those in urgent need. Closures and blockades need to be lifted and unhindered access allowed to humanitarian supplies. The events of 31

May 2010 that led tragic loss of life and the reports of killings and injuries to people on the boats carrying supplies for Gaza is deplorable.

The continued levy of fees and charges for the transit of humanitarian goods is not called for as it seriously affects the working of Agency which is already short of funds. The detention of UNRWA staff and lack of Agency access to and information on its staff is matter of serious concern. We support the Commission calls on all parties to respect United Nations resolutions and international law, including international humanitarian law.

We support the call of the UNRWA Chairperson regarding removal of restrictions on the movement of agency staff and goods in throughout UNRWA's areas of work. We also take note of UNRWA welcoming new measures towards easing of movement of goods to Gaza. However, more relaxation on movement of reconstruction material is required to effectively address the situation in Gaza.

We have, as in the past, manifested our support to the Palestinian people through continuing developmental support to Palestine. Last year, we enhanced our annual contribution to UNRWA to \$ 1 million, besides, making a special contribution of US \$ 1 million to UNRWA in response to UNWRA's flash appeal. Last year and this year, India contributed US\$ 10 million annually as untied budget support to the Palestinian National Authority. This year's budget support followed from discussions between His Excellency, President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in New Delhi in February this year. These exemplify India's continuing commitment to Palestine.

The support for the Palestinian cause has been a central feature of India's foreign policy since even before it achieved independence in 1947. India will continue to do all within its capacities to assist Palestine in its endeavours in capacity and institution-building. We salute the struggling people of Palestine. We express our solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Mr. Chairman,

It is critical for the international community to work closely with the parties with a view to encouraging them to resume direct negotiations that began in September. We are hopeful that the talks and negotiations would continue, leading to a comprehensive peace process for final resolution of the conflict.

Till such time, Mr. Chairman, it is incumbent upon all of us to fully support UNRWA, as the primary source of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees. For this reason, we endorse all efforts to support UNRWA by expanding its capacity to render assistance.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

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