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**UN AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES HOLDS EMERGENCY SESSION OF DONORS AND HOSTS TO DISCUSS THE AGENCY'S DIRE FINANCIAL SITUATION**

[الأونروا تعقد جلسة طارئة للجهات المانحة والمستفيضة لتدارس الأزمة المالية الحادة التي تواجهها](#)

**26 July 2015****Jerusalem**

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, is holding an extraordinary session of its Advisory Commission today, to discuss the Agency's most severe financial crisis ever. The Commission will review the growing risk that UNRWA may have to delay the start of the academic year in some 700 schools for half a million students across the Middle East unless the deficit of US\$ 101 million can be fully funded before the school year is due to start. The session is taking place in Jordan and brings together leading UNRWA donors and host governments.

"I am alarmed that our current funding crisis may force us to consider a delay in the start of the school year," said UNRWA Commissioner-General Pierre Krähenbühl. "Such a decision would generate much anxiety and despair for hundreds of thousands of boys and girls, deeply dedicated to their studies. Education lies at the very heart of the identity and dignity of Palestine refugees and of what UNRWA stands for. Our schools also provide a measure of stability in a very unstable region. Possible delays in opening the school year would also have grave implications for host governments."

The extraordinary Advisory Commission session will be discussing a special report to be sent by the Commissioner-General to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and on to all 193 members of the United Nations. The report sets out the implications of the Agency's US\$ 101 million deficit for 2015, the measures the Agency has taken to reduce costs, and the strenuous efforts to seek the necessary funds. It also outlines urgent steps that could be taken to put UNRWA on a firm financial footing going forward.

As things currently stand, UNRWA has enough money to maintain its services essential to protect public health, which includes immunizations for children, primary health care, relief and sanitation and some emergency programmes through to the end of 2015, but the funding is insufficient to guarantee the stable provision of its education services from September onwards.

The Agency calls on all donors, partners and UN member states to actively step forward with critical funding to allow the school year to begin without interruption and to preserve the historic investment in human development of Palestine refugees, recognized as one of the most successful processes of its kind in the Middle East. Ensuring the continued provision of education is a matter of dignity, rights and regional stability.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, and financial support has not kept pace with an increased demand for services caused by growing numbers of registered refugees and deepening poverty. As a result, the UNRWA General Fund, which supports core essential services and most staffing costs, operates with a large deficit.

UNRWA emergency programmes and key projects, also operating with large deficits, are funded through separate funding portals.

UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5 million registered Palestine refugees.

Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, and microfinance.

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