
UNRWA Unveils 'Ten Youth Commitments'

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الأونروا تميّط اللثام عن "الالتزامات العشرة حيال الشباب"



A two-day international conference on "Engaging Youth: Palestine Refugees in a Changing Middle East" convened by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), concluded today in Brussels with UNRWA Commissioner-General, Filippo Grandi, unveiling ten "Youth Commitments" on behalf of the UN Agency.

The meeting was addressed by a number of key world leaders. It was opened by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al Malki, who spoke on behalf of President Abbas, the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, Didier Reynders, and Jordan, Nasser Joudeh, and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Nabil al-Araby. Robert Serry, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, delivered a message on behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The meeting was also attended by over 400 other participants and stakeholders, including 24 Palestine refugee youth from Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as two young Palestinian bloggers.

Following closing remarks by the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, and Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, the UNRWA Commissioner-General announced ten concrete commitments through which UNRWA will strengthen its support to, and better engage Palestine refugee youth, with a sharper youth focus in the ongoing Agency reforms of its education and health programmes.

These commitments also included enhanced vocational training and micro-finance opportunities, fundraising for scholarships, expanding its successful skills programme for young refugees first piloted in Syria, advocacy on rights of special concern to youth.

The Commissioner-General also committed to greater cooperation with international and UN youth initiatives, and - responding to strong demands from the group of young refugees and other stakeholders - he promised that UNRWA would work with them in creating mechanisms to consult and communicate with Palestine refugee youth region-wide on the planning and implementation of UNRWA activities in which they have a stake.

In closing, Grandi stressed the importance of listening to refugee youth and responding to their concerns.

"These ten commitments," he said, "are quite concrete. They are also urgent, and cannot wait. Work begins tomorrow, the first day of spring. Indeed, this will be UNRWA's year of refugee youth and it will go from spring to spring."

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Background information:

UNRWA provides assistance, protection and advocacy for nearly five million registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the occupied Palestinian territory, pending a solution to their plight. The Agency's services encompass education, primary health care, poverty alleviation for the poorest of the poor, camp infrastructure and improvement, community support, microfinance, and emergency and humanitarian response, including in times of armed conflict.

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