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### Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

#### Programme budget 2010-2011

United Nations New York, 2009

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#### Chapter I

##### Introduction to the 2010-2011 biennium budget

1. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established under General Assembly resolution 302(IV) of 8 December 1949 and became operational on 1 May 1950. Its mandate is to respond to the needs of Palestine refugees until a durable and just solution is found to the refugee issue. It is now one of the largest United Nations programmes, supporting a population of 4.67 million Palestine refugees under its mandate, with over 29,500 staff.

2. UNRWA's mission is to "help Palestine refugees achieve their full potential in human development under the difficult circumstances in which they live". The Agency fulfils this mission by providing a variety of essential services within the framework of international standards to Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Among United Nations agencies, UNRWA is unique in delivering services directly, and as such is similar in character to a public service organisation. UNRWA's mandate -which derives from the General Assembly and has evolved over time in response to developments in the operational context- extends at present to providing education, health, relief and social services, microfinance and emergency assistance to refugees, infrastructure and camp improvement within refugee camps, and refugee protection.

##### Context

3. UNRWA works against a backdrop of significant trends and pressures. These affect UNRWA's ability to realise its objectives and present challenges to which the Agency's Medium Term Strategy for the period 2010-2015 (MTS) seeks to respond. The factors include the absence of a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, ongoing denial of refugees' rights and recurrent armed conflict in some UNRWA locations, the policies and contributions of UNRWA's donor countries and changes taking place within the refugee population itself.

4. The refugee population has changed since the time of UNRWA's genesis. In 1950, there were approximately 750,000 Palestine refugees. Their number has increased by more than six times to 4.67 million in 2008, with an average annual growth rate of three per cent (though this is abating). In the past 20 years the refugee population has nearly doubled. Use of key UNRWA services has increased as a result. Population density and overcrowding in refugee camps is amongst the highest in the world. Critical demographic shifts are also apparent. The refugee population is predominantly made up of young people. More than 56 per cent of refugees were under 25 years of age in 2000. In addition, only 30 per cent of refugees now live within refugee camps.

5. While the refugee population compares well with middle income countries on some indicators of human development such as infant mortality, life expectancy, adult literacy and immunisation, the picture is less positive in other areas. The prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) related to lifestyle is increasing, in line with global trends. There is extreme poverty and vulnerability in all fields of operation, and clear signs that this is worsening in some fields. Unemployment levels among refugees are also high in all fields.

6. The five fields in which UNRWA operates share similarities, but are also distinctive. In Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic most refugees enjoy rights similar to local populations and mostly stable social conditions which afford them greater opportunities for human development. In Lebanon, in spite of considerable efforts by the government, the rights of refugees continue to be limited, reflecting the complex political situation of the country. Widespread devastation from Israel's military operation in December 2008 – January 2009 followed a period of protracted crisis in the Gaza Strip. Constant, low level violence and restrictions on movement characterise the West Bank. Over time these contextual factors have led to differences in the circumstances in which refugees find themselves, and determine what UNRWA can achieve and what must be the focus of UNRWA's resources and effort.

### Planning assumptions

7. The continuing elusiveness of a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the related absence of a solution to the plight of refugees, preclude UNRWA from assuming a radical departure from the status quo in the medium term. Planning and budgeting is therefore predicated on the continuation of the status quo. However, UNRWA must remain ready to respond to changes in political and economic contexts within the current overall scenario. Political and security developments in particular, may require changes to UNRWA's focus in certain fields, such as in the level of resources required for emergency planning, and the cost of meeting the needs of refugees' sliding into deeper poverty if local economies continue to deteriorate.

8. Staff costs constitute the bulk of UNRWA's budget (see Table 4 and Figure 3). This is because the day to day direct delivery of services requires a large number of staff (over 29,500 currently). Efforts to maintain parity with host authorities' public sector salaries render the Agency's financial sustainability susceptible to economic volatility.

9. Should host and donor governments experience continued economic pressures, the demands on UNRWA will also intensify. A reduction in host government service provision for example in the Syrian Arab Republic or Jordan, or a decline in the value of donor contributions to UNRWA would allow only limited realisation of the Agency's goals and delivery of core services.

10. Trends within the refugee population necessitate a stronger focus on data gathering, statistical analysis, flexibility and better planning to ensure service delivery remains sensitive and responsive to the changing needs of the refugee population.

11. However, the MTS's strategic objectives and prioritization of services provide a tool responsive to varying resource levels. Under continued financial pressure, UNRWA will be guided by the MTS in the allocation of scarce resources.

### Budget structure

12. This budget reflects the introduction in the Agency of new approaches to strategic planning and results based budgeting in line with United Nations best practice. Its structure reflects the Agency's MTS for the period 2010-2015 and its contents are the product of the implementation of programme cycle management. The chapters that follow and the expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and measurements set out therein, reflect UNRWA's commitment to results-based planning and budgeting and a shift away from planning based primarily on inputs and activities.

13. The MTS identifies four human development goals for Palestine refugees, namely, to:

- a) have a long and healthy life;
- b) acquire knowledge and skills;
- c) have a decent standard of living; and
- d) enjoy human rights to the fullest extent possible.

14. From these four human development goals, 15 strategic objectives have been identified for the medium term, 2010 to 2015.

15. Implementation Plans have been prepared in each Field and for each Headquarters Department for the first biennium of the MTS 2010-2011. The Implementation Plans are based on the human development goals and strategic objectives set out in the MTS. Field Implementation Plans describe how UNRWA's five core programmes – Education, Health, Relief and Social Services, Infrastructure and Camp Improvement, and Microfinance – will be implemented during the 2010–2011 biennium in each Field in order to realize the expected accomplishments and outputs set out herein. In addition to describing the core programmes covered by the Agency's Regular Budget, the plans include projects (time-bound or temporal activities) that are complementary to the core programmes and which are subject to direct funding. Projects represent a key component to achieve the strategic objectives and implement the MTS.

16. Unlike previous budgets, this Budget includes a breakdown by goals and strategic objectives rather than by programme. The purpose of this innovation is to link financial resources directly to the achievement of results consistent with the Agency's strategy. It is in line with best practice, is in response to the demands of United Nations Member States and is in line with advice of the Agency's Advisory Commission.

17. The following pages contain the listed summary tables:

Figure 1: An Organizational Chart of UNRWA broken down by Department and showing the number of international and area staff located in each Department.

Table 1: A summary of the Programme Budget for 2010–2011 broken down by, amongst other things, Human Development Goal, Regular Budget and Project Budget.

Table 2 and Figure 2: A breakdown of the Regular Budget by Field with comparative figures for 2006–2007 and 2008–2009 biennia.

Table 3 and Figure 3: A breakdown of the Regular Budget by Human Development Goal with comparative figures for 2006–2007 and 2008–2009.

Table 4 and Figure 4: A breakdown of the Regular Budget by Category of Expenditure.

Figures 5 and 6: A breakdown of the project budgets by Human Development Goal and Field.

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