



## Secretary-General

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### **FOLLOWING ANOTHER 'PAINFUL YEAR' IN MIDDLE EAST, SECRETARY-GENERAL TELLS MEETING**

#### **ON PALESTINE REFUGEES 'WE NEED TO SEE TWO STATES LIVING SIDE BY SIDE IN PEACE'**

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message, delivered by Bader Al-Dafa, Executive-Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Hosts and Donors Meeting, Dead Sea, Jordan, today 18 November:

It is a pleasure to send warm greetings to all the participants in this important annual gathering.

You meet near the end of what has been another painful year for Palestine refugees and, indeed, all the people of the region. The tragic conflict in Gaza and southern Israel has left an extremely grave situation, which remains unresolved. I was deeply grieved by the loss of life and the extent of the damage I saw when I travelled there in the immediate aftermath of the conflict.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, divisions still run deep between Fatah and Hamas, despite sustained mediation efforts by Egypt, and the gulf between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is widening. Meanwhile, Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues, and the Gaza blockade remains in place. These are serious obstacles to the realization of our shared goal of an independent, contiguous and viable state of Palestine.

Under the leadership of the United States, and with the full support of the Quartet, there have been serious efforts aimed at a resumption of negotiations between the parties, including for a solution to the refugee issue in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. Palestinians have waited too long for an end to occupation and a state of their own. Israelis have a right to live in peace and harmony with their neighbours. More than ever, for both peoples, for the region, and for the international community as a whole, we need to see two states living side by side in peace and security.

On 8 December, UNRWA will mark the sixtieth anniversary of its establishment by the United Nations General Assembly. At the commemorative event held at United Nations Headquarters in September, I was impressed by the political support expressed for the Agency and its vital services. I hope this support will be translated into greater financial assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank my good colleague and friend, Commissioner-General Karen Koning AbuZayd, for her nine years of service to UNRWA, and 19 more with UNHCR. Under her leadership, UNRWA has undertaken ambitious internal reforms that have strengthened accountability, efficiency and the empowerment of staff and management. As she concludes her wise and steady stewardship, I salute her and wish her all the very best in her future endeavours.

Please accept my best wishes for a successful meeting.

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