



## Secretary-General

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### **PALESTINE RELIEF AGENCY PROVIDES 'STEADYING INFLUENCE' IN REGION BURDENED**

#### **BY CONFLICT, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL IN MESSAGE TO AMMAN MEETING**

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message to the hosts and donors meeting of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in Amman, 19 November:

I am pleased to send my warm greetings to all participants at the third annual hosts and donors meeting. Your attendance speaks volumes about the strength of the partnership between UNRWA and the countries and authorities whose hospitality and generosity make UNRWA's programmes possible.

UNRWA's humanitarian and human development work ensures that a population of 4.4 million Palestine refugees receive services that are essential not only to their lives and livelihoods, but also to their human dignity. In a region that is burdened by conflict, tensions and uncertainties, the Agency's presence serves as a steadying influence and bears testimony to the international community's resolve to tackle the needs of Palestine refugees. The special partnership that UNRWA shares with its hosts and donors is itself an expression of this international commitment.

In this time of extraordinary hardship for Palestinians, we must remain firm in our determination to assist and protect them, while playing our respective roles in support of UNRWA. We should continue to demand that all sides respect and observe international law, protect civilian lives and property, and act within the bounds of restraint and reason. We should redouble our efforts to help Palestinians fulfil their just aspirations for a viable State that thrives in peace and security with its neighbours. While these efforts are in process, it is critical that you ensure that UNRWA's General Fund and its emergency programmes for Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon are fully funded. It is in no one's interests that UNRWA should continue to grapple with its present levels of budget deficits.

I call on you also to maintain your generous support for UNRWA's organizational development process, which is in tune with reforms to which I have given my personal support across the UN system. Since taking office, I have emphasized the need for the UN system to become more flexible and responsive to the needs of its beneficiaries in an interdependent multi-polar world. I am very encouraged by the progress UNRWA is making to use resources more efficiently and to strengthen its framework for responsible management. I encourage donors to maintain the favourable funding trends of the last 18 months, thus ensuring that the organizational development process is brought to fruition in due course. I am sure you will agree with me that all of us – hosts, donors, the United Nations as whole and, most importantly, the refugees – stand to gain from the success of UNRWA's management reforms.

Looking ahead, I am encouraged by the preparations for an international meeting on Middle East peace, to be hosted by the United States. I believe that such a meeting represents an opportunity to concentrate the minds of the parties on the urgency of seeking peaceful avenues to resolving their conflict. We should be hopeful that the conference could re-launch a process of negotiation, which in turn could lead to concrete outcomes to the benefit of both sides. The United Nations remains committed to a negotiated, two-State solution and to the establishment of an independent and viable State of Palestine. We recognize that, in order to attain that goal, the occupation must be brought to an end and the security of Israel must be assured. We further acknowledge that a just and durable solution to the refugee issue should be an integral part of the peaceful resolution of this conflict.

Pending the fulfilment of these aspirations, it is vital that Palestine refugees, particularly those living in the West Bank, Gaza and northern Lebanon, are protected and cared for. With regard to Gaza in particular, I expressed concern about decisions and policies whose effects would be contrary to international and human rights law. The residents of Gaza, especially the old, the young and the sick, are already suffering from the impact of prolonged closure. They should not be punished for the unacceptable actions of militants and extremists.

The coming months will be critical to our collective efforts to restore hope to Palestinians. The United Nations stands ready to do its part, and I trust that you as members of the international community will do yours.

I thank you again for the indispensable support you give to UNRWA and wish you a successful conference.

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