

*The Permanent Mission
of the Kingdom of Morocco
to the United Nations*



البعثة الدائمة
لمملكة المغرب لدى الأمم المتحدة
نيويورك

66th Session of the General Assembly

Statement

of

M. Amine Chabi

Counsellor

Before

The Fourth Committee

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for
Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)**

(Item 52)

New York, November 1st, 2011

Check against delivery

Madam Chair,

I would like at the outset to thank M. Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestine Refugees in the Near East, for the comprehensive and detailed briefing that he provided to the Committee yesterday on the achievements, the challenges and the setbacks that UNRWA faces daily in the accomplishment of its mandate.

My delegation aligns itself with the Statement delivered by Egypt on behalf of the Non Aligned Movement, and would like to add the following aspects in its national capacity.

Madam Chair,

The Kingdom of Morocco commends UNRWA for its relentless efforts to continue delivering its programmes and services to the nearly 5 million Palestinian refugees in its fields of operation. We would like to stress the vital role of UNRWA in contributing to regional stability.

It is worth mentioning that the Palestinian refugee population has grown by 4.2% in comparison with last year. The unemployment rate among refugees stood at 29.4% in 2010. This raises significant additional challenges for the UN agency as it attempts to fulfill its mandate under hard conditions in priority areas like education, health, relief, social services, infrastructure, camp improvement and microfinance.

Morocco condemns the restrictions of movement imposed on Palestinian refugees. The separation barrier, closures, curfews lead to the worsening of the situation of refugees and continue to hinder economic development, specifically access to sources of employment and essential goods and services.

Madam Chair,

The multifaceted mandate of UNRWA is critical in the provision of education, the promotion of health, and other mechanisms that promote human development and empowerment of the refugee populations.

Morocco welcomes the reform agenda being implemented by the Agency. We believe that the core mission of UNRWA is and must remain the improvement of the quality of services provided to the refugees. The vision behind the "Sustaining Change" plan deserves our full support as UN

membership since it is geared to cater to the needs of the most vulnerable categories among the refugees.

In this regard, and since figures speak louder than words, an illustration of UNRWA's critical role is to be found in the following equation: with 30,000 staff, the Agency must respond to the direct needs of 750,000 Palestine refugees and ensure protection to nearly 5 million refugees spread in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. These figures underline the extreme conditions under which the Agency attempts to make ends meet.

In 2010, UNRWA provided direct support to 270,000 poorest refugees under its social-safety net programme. Over the years, the Agency has trained more than 60,000 graduates and provided micro-finance products to some 20,000 refugees and rehabilitated about 13,500 shelters.

Despite these achievements that deserve to be commended, UNRWA is confronted with numerous challenges among which is the overcrowding of refugee camps, the increase in poverty levels of refugees especially in Gaza and the West Bank and *last but not least* the long-term structural underfunding of the Agency.

Madam Chair,

The plight of the Palestinian refugees is a motive of great concern for the His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Government and Moroccan civil society. The Palestinian cause is and remains a national cause for the people of Morocco.

As Chairman of the Al Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Conference, His Majesty King Mohammed VI supported early on the request for full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations, including recognition of its sovereignty on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Through Bayt Mal Al Quds, an Agency whose mission is to implement a number of programmes and projects directed towards health, education and population issues for Palestinians in Jerusalem, as well as the safeguard of the religious and civilizational heritage of Al Quds, the Moroccan people donated in 2010, 7 million dollars, to conduct rehabilitation projects, funding of Palestinian schools and hospitals in Jerusalem.

Moreover, Moroccan civil society has set successful partnerships with UNRWA. The Morocco-Palestine Solidarity Association has contributed

\$85,000 to aid Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt). This generous donation will go towards UNRWA's mobile clinic programme, which delivers medical services to isolated and vulnerable Palestinian communities in the West Bank.

The contribution is the second of its kind from the Association. In late 2009, a donation of US\$50,000 allowed 13 refugee families to repair their homes, which were damaged during the last Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip.

Madam Chair,

Before concluding, I would like to underline that the Palestinian refugees, now approaching nearly five million in the region, are people in exile; a painful and decades-long exile away from their homes, their land, their history, with no solution in sight. UNRWA was created on a temporary base as a quick fix, but it ended up becoming the educator, the loaner for microfinance projects, the health provider. Since its creation, the Agency has constantly strived to "do more with less" making significant achievements thanks to its dedicated personnel who deserve credit and appreciation.

I thank you.