

**Statement by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland on behalf of the Member States of the
European Union**

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

Fourth Committee

2 November 2005



I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey and Croatia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, I would like to stress that the European Union appreciates the commitment by UNRWA staff and management in fulfilling their duties under especially difficult, often very dangerous circumstances. The European Union underlines its strong support for and commitment to the essential work which UNRWA carries out.

The EU also wishes to express gratitude to the Governments of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria whose countries for more than five decades have been providing assistance to Palestinian refugees.

The European Union is the largest contributor to UNRWA. With contributions from the European Commission and Member States of over 200 million Euro in 2005, the EU contributes more than half of the revenues of UNRWA. Our policy is to increase our support to Palestinian refugees throughout the region.

The EU stresses the importance of revitalising and energising the Advisory Commission.

The European Union expresses deep concern at the continuing humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and calls on the Israeli Government, in line with international law and UN Security Council Resolution 1544, to cease demolitions and to take urgent action to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians.

The EU continues to be concerned about the severe humanitarian conditions affecting the refugees, in particular the situation of Palestinian refugee children. We call for every possible effort by the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority to give children special protection and fully to respect the rights of children and to implement applicable obligations.

At the same time, we appeal to the Israeli Government to show restraint and to take no action that aggravates the humanitarian and economic plight of the Palestinian people. We appeal for it to take measures without delay, in accordance with the obligations of the Roadmap, to improve the security and humanitarian and economic conditions of the Palestinian people.

The situation on the ground has seriously hampered the capability of all humanitarian operators including UNRWA and other UN Agencies, to provide essential services. Reports about limitations to the freedom of movement of UNRWA staff are of particular concern. The European Union urges the Government of Israel to ensure full and secure access for diplomatic and humanitarian personnel and goods as required by principles and practices of International Humanitarian Law, and by the Road Map.

The EU has expressed its concern over the kidnapping of international and Palestinian aid workers earlier this year. We call on the Palestinian Authority to work to ensure the safety of all foreign aid workers in Palestine.

The European Union notes the publication of the Medium Term Plan. UNRWA's services to the refugees constitute an essential investment in their resources. UNRWA has developed a fast-

growing microfinance and micro-enterprise programme as well as a range of infrastructure projects to improve the living conditions of the refugees. The Medium Term plan focuses on areas that will be crucial to promoting stability, and maps out UNRWA's priorities over the next few years. UNRWA's relief and social services programme addresses the needs of the most vulnerable among the refugee population. The EU is concerned about the financing gap that still exists in UNRWA's emergency programmes. This risks further diminishing the level of security and services provided, when expectations and needs are rising. We support the Commissioner-General in her efforts to enlarge the donor community.

The European Union reaffirms its readiness to continue providing assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Future EU assistance will reflect priorities as set out in the Palestinian Authority's three year Medium Term Development Plan.

The European Union welcomes disengagement as a significant step towards implementing the Roadmap. The EU stands ready to help the Quartet Special Envoy for disengagement, James Wolfensohn, to resolve outstanding issues on disengagement, particularly concerning the economic viability of Gaza. The EU emphasises the importance of reaching an agreement on access to Gaza for people and goods through land borders, a port and airport.

The European Union recently expressed its concern at the escalation of violence in Gaza and the suicide bombing in Hadera. The EU condemns the violence perpetrated by Palestinian militants and encourages the Palestinian Authority to continue to take firm action against those responsible and to take all necessary steps to take full control of security in the Gaza Strip. Terrorist attacks damage the interests of the Palestinians and have dire humanitarian consequences. While recognising Israel's right to protect its citizens against terrorist attacks, the EU calls on Israel to act with restraint and to refrain from all extra-judicial killings, which are contrary to international law.

The European Union also urges Israel to reverse its settlement policy and to freeze all settlement activity, to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001 and to end land confiscation and the construction of the separation barrier on Palestinian land, all of which threaten to render the two-State solution physically impossible to implement. The EU remains particularly concerned by the settlement building and the construction of the separation barrier in and around East Jerusalem, which is having a detrimental effect on the lives of Palestinians and jeopardises a final status agreement on Jerusalem.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a negotiated two-State solution agreed between the parties which would result in a viable, contiguous, sovereign and independent Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. It recalls the established EU position that the Union will not recognise any change to the pre-1967 borders other than those arrived at by agreement between the parties. The European Union unequivocally reaffirms that the Roadmap, as endorsed by Security Council resolution 1515, is the fundamental framework for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and calls upon both parties to take steps to fulfil their Roadmap obligations and commitments.

The EU sincerely hopes that positive developments will soon be produced, leading without delay to a fair, stable and equitable solution to the Palestinian Refugees issue in the framework of a final and comprehensive permanent status agreement, in line with relevant UN resolutions. Until then, the services provided by UNRWA remain essential to ensure a decent life to Palestinian refugees in the Middle East.