



**MISSION PERMANENTE DE LA SUISSE
AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES**

Seul le texte prononcé fait foi

60^{ème} session de l'Assemblée générale

Point 30 de l'ordre du jour

**Office de secours et de travaux des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés de
Palestine dans le Proche-Orient (UNRWA)**

Déclaration

de

**M. Andrea Semadeni
Conseiller**

Check against delivery

60th General Assembly

Item 30

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

Statement

by

**Mr Andrea Semadeni
Counsellor**

New York, le 1^{er} novembre 2005

Unofficial Translation

Mr President,

First of all, we would like to congratulate Ms Karen Koenig AbuZaid on her recent appointment as UNRWA's Commissioner-General. We wish her well in the discharge of her mandate and look forward to a continued close and frank relationship with UNRWA under her leadership.

We thank the Commissioner-General for her comprehensive report to the General Assembly covering the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. The report gives a detailed and excellent account of UNRWA's invaluable work for the Palestine refugees and the challenges and difficulties it has been facing in the accomplishment of its mission.

Switzerland would like to take this opportunity to commend UNRWA for the quality of the services it continues to provide to the Palestine refugees in its five areas of operations. UNRWA's education, health as well as its relief and social services programmes are strongly rooted in the refugee community. The success of the programmes is shown in the high levels of the refugee students' performance in their examinations, the average health standards of the refugee community, as well as in their contribution to the local economy.

We should also recall the important support the host countries extend to the Palestine refugees. Indeed, services that UNRWA has been able to provide to the refugees could not have developed without the institutional strength and the supportive infrastructure of the host countries. We endorse the renewed dialogue and measures recently implemented in Lebanon aimed at improving the dire socio-economic situation of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territory UNRWA continues to work in an extremely difficult environment. As illustrated in the Commissioner-General's report, restrictions on mobility and security concerns have continued to hamper both humanitarian efforts and refugees' access to lands, employment and services, a situation which has been further exacerbated by the construction of the barrier by Israel. It is therefore necessary for the international community to continue to call on Israel - whose right to protect its population is fully recognised - to comply with international humanitarian law, and to facilitate at all times access for the Palestinian population, including the UNRWA-registered refugees, to humanitarian services.

The plight of the refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is sadly illustrated by the joint study undertaken by the Food and Agricultural Organization, the World Food Programme and UNRWA which found that 1.4 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza did not have food security. The Commissioner-General's report also refers to the "feminisation" of poverty among the refugees, as is indicated by the significant increase in the incidence of vulnerable households headed by a woman.

Switzerland hopes for a sustained improvement to the overall security situation and for positive developments regarding economic recovery in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. This could enable UNRWA to wind down its emergency operations and better concentrate on the implementation of its main programmes. We are however aware that UNRWA needs to remain prepared for further emergency needs.

Mr President,

In June 2004, Switzerland had the pleasure to organise jointly with UNRWA the Geneva Conference “Meeting the Needs of Palestine Refugees in the Near East: Building Partnership in Support of UNRWA”. It was the largest ever conference on UNRWA and on how to enhance the international community’s support for the humanitarian and socio-economic needs of UNRWA-registered Palestine refugees. We are pleased to note the progress made in the follow-up to this conference. UNRWA has kept its stakeholders committed to the implementation of the key recommendations made at the conference.

Switzerland attaches particular importance to the following issues that were dealt with in this context:

- Expanding the membership of UNRWA’s Advisory Commission with a view to reinvigorating it and ensuring a deeper reflection on stakeholder involvement.
- Launching a comprehensive programme of data collection that will provide the basis for a shift to a more needs-oriented provision of UNRWA services, including for the most vulnerable refugees.
- Adopting measures to improve management on the basis of a strategic framework, with the support of key donors in a harmonised approach, and aimed at further enhancing UNRWA's programme-management capacity.
- Strengthening UNRWA’s Geneva platform, further developing and facilitating partnership and synergies within the global humanitarian community and UNRWA's active participation in the debate on humanitarian policies and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

Mr President,

We would finally like to pay a special tribute to the thousands of UNRWA staff members who have continued to demonstrate their dedication, sense of responsibility and courageous work for the Palestine refugees. The Commissioner-General and her whole team deserve our respect and our gratitude.

Thank you, Mr President.