



PERMANENT MISSION OF TURKEY TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**STATEMENT BY MR. ERSİN ERÇİN,
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TURKEY,
BEFORE THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE
ON AGENDA ITEM 30: "UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY
FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST"**

New York, 2 November 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey has aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union. As our main concerns have been duly reflected in that statement, I wish to expound on the following points under this agenda item vis-à-vis the current situation in the region.

Mr. Chairman,

Turkey has welcomed the implementation of the unilateral disengagement by Israel from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. We deem the withdrawal as a significant step towards achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. We call upon both parties to utilize the momentum which the withdrawal has created by taking the necessary steps to fulfill their respective obligations and commitments towards achieving the two-State solution envisioned under the Quartet Road Map plan.

Despite an early glimpse of hope for cooperation between the parties in the aftermath of the withdrawal however, the situation in the region remains fragile. Just last week, another terrorist attack in Israel claimed innocent lives. Turkey unequivocally condemns all acts of terrorism, as well as provocation and incitement to violence in the strongest terms. It is our ardent view that the region should not be allowed to fall victim to violence, misery and desperation once again at this critical juncture. As we strongly denounce such acts of terror, we are also equally critical of improper and harsh retaliatory measures. We call on both parties to act with utmost restraint so as not to re-ignite the ruthless cycle of violence.

Mr. Chairman,

Such developments in the region bring me to the importance of UNRWA. First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity to extend Turkish Government's felicitations to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Mrs. Karen Koning Abu Zayd, on the assumption of her new post. I also would like to reiterate our strong commitment to UNRWA's mandate and goals. I would be remiss if I fail to mention here our sincere

appreciation of the tireless efforts of the UNRWA staff to carry out their important humanitarian work.

Mr. Chairman,

As the largest UN relief and human development agency in the region, UNRWA has been tasked to deal with one of the most difficult aspects of the Middle East question. The Agency, in fact, is the life line for over four million Palestinian refugees dispersed throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Addressing the multi-faceted tasks and fundamental needs of the Palestinian refugees is certainly a tremendous undertaking. The eloquent and comprehensive presentation of the annual report by the Commissioner-General in the last meeting, indeed, reflects the realities facing the Palestinian refugees.

We note with concern the continuation of dire economic conditions particularly in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank due to Israeli policies of closures and other restrictive measures, which not only impede the daily lives of the Palestinian refugees, but also the activities of the Agency. It is our conviction that the steady provision of UNRWA services is essential and that security measures by Israel should not in any way hinder access to humanitarian assistance. In this context, we believe that UNRWA's efforts to coordinate and complement activities with the Special Envoy of the Quartet for Disengagement would facilitate endeavors to ease the plight of the refugees. However, key issues pertaining to the Gaza Strip are yet to be settled by Israel with the relevant parties to achieve progress on the ground. We urge these issues to be resolved in a timely manner.

Mr. Chairman,

On a more positive note, we are pleased with the ongoing reform process within the Agency to devise new approaches to ensure the sustainable implementation of its programs. To this effect, we endorse the recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, which Turkey is privileged to Chair.

Furthermore, Turkey is encouraged by the efforts to expand the Advisory Commission of the Agency. With the membership of leading donors in the Advisory Commission, we believe that UNRWA will be better equipped to sustain the desired effective relationship between the stakeholders and the Palestinian refugees. As a member of the Advisory Commission, Turkey stands ready to contribute in any possible way it can to facilitate the work within Agency towards this end.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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