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Agenda item 7

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-ninth session

Draft report

Rapporteur: Mr. Jun Yamada (Japan)

Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for the year 2020

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 22 Palestine refugees

1. At its 14th meeting, on 12 June 2019, the Committee considered programme 22, Palestine refugees, of the proposed programme plan for 2020 and programme performance information for 2018 ([A/74/6 \(Sect. 26\)](#)). The Committee also had before it a note by the Secretariat on the review of the proposed programme plan by sectoral, functional and regional bodies ([E/AC.51/2019/CRP.1/Rev.2](#)).

2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the programme and responded to queries raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Several delegations expressed appreciation for the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in implementing its programme, providing assistance and protection to 5.4 million refugees between Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, notwithstanding the difficulties faced on the ground and the shortfall in funding. A delegation underscored the importance of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

4. Appreciation was expressed for the important and stabilizing role of the programme in the Middle East, an area that had experienced serious upheaval in



recent years. It was underscored that the Palestinian people increasingly depended on the international assistance that was received through the programme. Appreciation was expressed for the depoliticizing nature of the work of UNRWA in improving the quality of life of and providing education services for the millions living in dangerous circumstances.

5. Several delegations referred to the recent developments described in paragraph 26.5 of the programme, in particular that, in 2018, UNRWA had been confronted with the greatest financial challenge in its history owing to the abrupt loss of \$300 million, about a quarter of total essential funding requirements for the year. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts by UNRWA to overcome the crisis in the short term, and a call was made for the Agency to continue its fundraising efforts. A delegation announced that its Government was allocating \$10 million to UNRWA, in equal part over five years until 2021, saying that providing assistance and support to the Agency would help the Middle East peace process, a part of which must be to find a just solution to the Palestinian problem.

6. Noting that the lack of funding was a perennial problem, a delegation expressed the view that it might be beneficial for the programme to have a dedicated subprogramme with the objective of raising sufficient funds. Another delegation said that the funding challenges described in the programme appeared to contradict the inclusion, as an external factor, of the planning assumption described in paragraph 26.9 (h): “UNRWA is able to raise sufficient funds”.

7. A delegation remarked that the deliverables for all five subprogrammes were focused on the provision of direct services and sought information on how those services would contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The delegation suggested that it would have been beneficial to include a more developed narrative on the contribution of UNRWA to the achievement of the Goals.

8. A delegation representing the country that hosted the most Palestinians of all non-Arab countries expressed support for the programme and sought further details on what protection to refugees was provided by the programme under subprogramme 1, Palestine refugee rights under international law are protected and promoted.

9. With regard to subprogramme 3, School-aged children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic education, it was noted that UNRWA pupils consistently outperformed their peers in public schools in national and international standardized tests. Reference was made to the challenge and response of the highlighted planned result for 2020, notably, inclusive education, where 37.7 per cent of the pupils identified as having a disability received support, which was below the target of 42 per cent for the biennium 2018–2019. In that regard, a delegation welcomed the focus on persons with disabilities.

10. A delegation, recalling that much had been said about the format of the budget documentation in reviews of other programmes, said that it would not elaborate further on the subject.

11. A delegation noted the proposed increase in resources for the programme and encouraged UNRWA to continue on its efficiency path so that it could be on a more stable footing in the future.