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Agenda item 7

Adoption of the report of the Committee on its sixtieth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2021

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 22 Palestine refugees

1. During its sixtieth session, the Committee considered programme 22, Palestine refugees, of the proposed programme plan for 2021 and programme performance information for 2019 ([A/75/6 \(Sect. 26\)](#)).
2. The representative of the Secretary-General introduced the programme and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation and support for the work done under the programme by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). It was noted that the work of UNRWA was essential for stability in the region, and some delegations indicated that they had increased their contribution to the programme and their support to Palestinian refugees. One delegation underscored its support for the rights of the Palestinian people and a two-State solution.
4. It was noted that, because the programme had been drafted and compiled early in 2020, there was no mention of the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in the document. While appreciating the comments made by the representative of UNRWA regarding the work that the Agency had done and would



do in relation to the matter, one delegation recommended that the programme be updated across the board to reflect the adjustments made because of the pandemic. One delegation enquired as to how the programmes would be implemented in 2021, given the Agency's struggles in recent years owing to insufficient funding. With regard to the prioritization of programmes, one delegation asked how UNRWA would deal with the new challenges, given that the planning assumptions were no longer applicable. The view was expressed that UNRWA had adapted quickly and well to the pandemic and the Agency's continued support and advocacy for a decent standard of living, in spite of the pandemic, were welcomed. The fundraising efforts by UNRWA to broaden its donor base further to achieve sustainable levels of funding were welcomed as well.

5. The view was expressed that the objectives of the programme were focused on large-scale social assistance and that the logic of sustainable and self-sufficient capacity-building for refugees (such as in the form of job-generating activities, vocational training and encouragement of productive investment) could be further demonstrated outside microfinance activities, the results of which could also be more detailed.

6. With regard to subprogramme 1, Palestine refugee rights under international law are protected and promoted, clarification was sought regarding the extent to which gender, noted as a strategic objective, could be more mainstreamed. A delegation underlined the importance of core services concerning education. Another delegation noted that there was little information on compliance audits regarding the distribution of funds, while there were frequent indications of corruption in Palestine, and that that could constitute a relevant indicator of the effectiveness of the management of the aid provided by UNRWA.

7. Information was sought with regard to paragraph 26.38 of the proposed programme budget for 2021 ([A/75/6 \(Sect. 26\)](#)), regarding subprogramme 2, Palestine refugee health is protected and the disease burden is reduced, in particular on how the programme would contribute to achieving the subprogramme's objective in the context of the pandemic.

8. Regarding subprogramme 3, School-aged children complete quality, equitable and inclusive basic education, result 1, learning side by side: inclusive education, clarification was sought as to why the performance measure shown in figure 26.VIII, percentage of students identified as having a disability who receive support, was decreasing from 53 per cent in 2020 to 45 per cent in 2021. The view was expressed that that was not a very proactive goal.

9. The view was expressed that the planned results for subprogramme 4, Palestine refugee capabilities are strengthened for increased livelihood opportunities, and subprogramme 5, Palestine refugees are able to meet their basic human needs of food, shelter and environmental health, seemed redundant.

Conclusions and recommendations

10. The Committee expressed its high appreciation for the essential work of UNRWA in alleviating the plight of the Palestine refugees, in particular women and children, pending a fair and long-overdue resolution of the question of the Palestine refugees, and commended the staff of the Agency for carrying out its work under exceptionally difficult political and financial conditions, and contributing to the stability of the region and to the viability of the two-State solution.

11. The Committee noted with strong appreciation the efforts to provide better and more inclusive education to school-aged children, including elementary and

preparatory education, and recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNRWA to further focus on that important matter.

12. The Committee stressed the importance of continuing to mainstream protection and gender into its operations and to integrate a gender perspective into its operational activities, deliverables and results as appropriate.

13. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 22, Palestine refugees, of the proposed programme budget for 2021.
