



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
7 June 2024

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination

Sixty-fourth session

New York, 13 May–14 June 2024

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2025

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 22

Palestine refugees

1. At its 15th meeting, on 23 May 2024, the Committee considered programme 22, Palestine refugees, of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and programme performance in 2023 ([A/79/6 \(Sect. 26\)](#)).

Discussion

2. Delegations expressed their appreciation and full support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its diligent work in the preparation of the proposed programme plan for 2025 and the delivery of mandated activities in accordance with General Assembly resolutions [194 \(III\)](#), [302 \(IV\)](#), [74/83](#), [75/93](#) and [76/77](#). It was highlighted that delegations had voted in favour of extending the mandate of UNRWA until 30 June 2026. The hard work of the Agency's staff was recognized, and several delegations expressed their condolences for those who had tragically lost their lives while fulfilling their duties.

3. In recognition of the Agency's important role in providing humanitarian assistance and acting as a stabilizing force in the region, a delegation emphasized that no other United Nations agency could deliver the scale of services in such a challenging operational context. The vital role of the Agency's programme for progressing human development indicators and meeting the needs of affected persons was also noted with appreciation. Unfortunately, the lack of progress on the Middle East peace process meant that, until a solution could be reached, UNRWA would continue to provide for the basic needs of 5.9 million refugees. While recognizing that the Committee for Programme and Coordination was not the principal body for



budgetary considerations, a delegation wondered whether, given the Agency's important role in the current context, it might be prudent to consider how mandate delivery could be enhanced by taking a more systematic approach to funding from sustainable sources of income. In that context, clarification was sought on what contingency plans had been in place for any changes to planning assumptions, such as insufficient funding for UNRWA, attacks on staff and installations, violations of United Nations immunity, or access restrictions on supplies into Gaza.

4. Support was expressed for the Agency's indispensable role in helping Palestinians in the occupied territory and in neighbouring Arab countries. The Agency's contribution to providing education, health care and social services to millions of Palestinians living in difficult and often dangerous conditions in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic was greatly appreciated. A delegation noted that the escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in recent months had been a real test for the Agency, which had lost 193 staff since 7 October 2023, who had given their lives to help suffering Palestinians in the face of a full-fledged military operation. The delegation also noted that UNRWA had been the target of a political campaign and accused of supporting Hamas, as a result of which a number of Western countries had withdrawn funding for the Agency, a move that had primarily affected Palestine refugees. However, a group of experts, led by the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Catherine Colonna, had confirmed the Agency's compliance with the principle of neutrality and its key role in providing assistance to Palestinians. An update was requested regarding the Agency's action plan based on the recommendations made by the group of experts, as well as information on how that plan might contribute to improved mandate delivery. The delegation called upon all donors to restore full funding for the Agency, welcomed the decision of several countries to take on additional financial commitments, and condemned attempts to discredit the Agency through disinformation campaigns. The delegation emphasized its continued commitment to make voluntary contributions on an annual basis to the Agency, given that its activities had an important stabilizing effect on the entire Middle East region. Delegations indicated their financial contributions. A delegation reiterated its call for the establishment of a long-term ceasefire in Gaza in accordance with Security Council resolution [2728 \(2024\)](#), in the absence of a political settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on the implementation of the two-State solution approved by the international community, with Israel and Palestine coexisting in peace and security within the 1967 borders.

5. Another delegation stood firm in its support of the Agency's crucial mandate of providing life-saving assistance and protection to Palestine refugees. The challenges faced by UNRWA under very difficult circumstances were recognized. Those challenges had become even more difficult in the face of the catastrophe in Gaza. UNRWA was commended for continuing to strive to fulfil its humanitarian mandates despite the adversities described in paragraph 26.3 and the impact on its activities, facilities and infrastructure. The uncertain situation in Gaza underscored the urgency of Member States' support for fulfilling the Agency's mandate. As noted in the proposed programme plan for 2025, it was not possible to properly estimate the scale and nature of the Agency's work in Gaza in 2025, as the situation kept worsening. Along the same lines, the situation on the ground prevented the Committee from duly assessing the operations of the Agency, owing to insufficient data on performance measures (para. 26.4).

6. The incorporation of a gender perspective in the Agency's initiatives in a cross-cutting manner was acknowledged. The inclusion of persons with disabilities across all fields of operations was also welcomed. Under subprogramme 3, Palestine refugees complete inclusive and equitable quality basic education, a delegation noted with satisfaction the emphasis on gender and disability sensitivity in the construction

of schools, as stated in result 3 for 2025, reflecting the Agency's commitment to inclusivity and diversity in serving the Palestinian community. The delegation reaffirmed its continued support and intention to contribute further to the mandate of UNRWA and the well-being of the Palestinian people and informed the Committee of its upcoming vice-chairmanship, and later in 2025 chairmanship, of the UNRWA Advisory Commission. The view was expressed that consensus could be reached on the vital programme with the active engagement of all delegations, the technical support and advice of the secretariat and the leadership of UNRWA. To that end, the delegation encouraged other delegations to draw inspiration from past successes and the fact that the Committee had been able to find common ground on that programme, with a view to providing hope and assistance to those in need and fulfilling their duty to support those who relied on the United Nations.

7. Another delegation expressed support for the delivery of aid in Gaza, while working closely with various United Nations entities, including the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as non-governmental organizations. Reviewing the proposed plan for 2025, a delegation asked why the programme did not include any reference to neutrality. Clarification was sought on the relevance of neutrality, especially under subprogramme 3. It was pointed out that further support for the principle of neutrality should be incorporated into the programme in the future.

8. In reference to subprogramme 2, Palestine refugees lead healthy lives, a delegation enquired about the results expected by the subprogramme for 2025. In addition, clarification was sought about whether it was possible to merge the issue of mental health into the work of subprogramme 2.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. **The Committee reiterated support for the mandate of UNRWA and commended its staff for carrying out its invaluable work under an exceptionally difficult security, political and financial environment.**

10. **The Committee paid tribute to the 193 UNRWA staff members who had lost their lives since October 2023, while reiterating the paramount importance of the safety of humanitarian personnel and respect for international humanitarian law.**

11. **The Committee expressed appreciation for the essential work of the Agency, which had assumed a critical, central and indispensable role in the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance, as well as protection services, for the benefit of approximately 6 million registered Palestine refugees in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.**

12. **The Committee recalled that following the onset of the conflict in Gaza, which had had a significant impact on Agency operations, regular UNRWA operations in Gaza had been suspended or adapted to cater for emergency interventions and the provision of basic services to Palestine refugees in Gaza.**

13. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNRWA to continue to take a flexible approach to the scale and nature of its operations in Gaza until regular Agency operations could resume, taking into account possible transitional periods.**

14. **The Committee emphasized the importance for UNRWA of a reliable audit, investigation and evaluation system, in accordance with the "three lines of defence" approach. The Committee stressed that it was important for UNRWA to consider its risk assessment, carried out as part of the enterprise risk**

management and internal control policy, when preparing its programme plans, and recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNRWA to incorporate those risks identified into the external factors of its programme plan, when relevant.

15. The Committee commended UNRWA for accepting the 50 recommendations contained in the final report for the Secretary-General on the independent review of mechanisms and procedures to ensure adherence by UNRWA to the humanitarian principle of neutrality.

16. While acknowledging that progress had been made, the Committee noted with appreciation that UNRWA was committed to taking the additional measures required to ensure the full adherence of the Agency to the recommendations contained in the final report.

17. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request UNRWA to continue to strengthen its governance processes and oversight mechanisms to guarantee that the Agency was delivering on its mandate with transparency, accountability and neutrality across all subprogrammes.

18. The Committee noted with appreciation the commitment of UNRWA to reviewing the final draft of its assessment by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, expected to be issued by July 2024, and to developing a comprehensive management response to the assessment.

19. The Committee took note of the need expressed by UNRWA for consistent resources and recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNRWA to ensure a more systematic and sustainable income of resources, in particular with a view to fully implementing the recommendations of the final report for the Secretary-General on the independent review of mechanisms and procedures to ensure adherence by UNRWA to the humanitarian principle of neutrality.

20. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the programme narrative of programme 22, Palestine refugees, of the proposed programme budget for 2025.
