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Chairperson: Mr. Chipaziwa (Zimbabwe)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 51: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(*continued*) (A/65/13, A/65/283, A/65/311 and A/65/225)

1. **Mr. Weisleder** (Costa Rica) said that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had been a key factor in reducing the effects of conflict and displacement on the civilian population and in maintaining stability in the region. His Government supported the role of UNRWA in the provision of essential services to the refugees and drew the international community's attention to the Agency's need for the necessary resources to perform its humanitarian task.

2. The parties involved must fully respect the impartiality, neutrality, humanity and independence of humanitarian assistance, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and international humanitarian law. The Palestinian population must receive UNRWA assistance without hindrance, continuously and in a timely manner. His Government called for an end to the armed confrontations that were impeding the flow of humanitarian assistance into the Gaza Strip.

3. The international community must strengthen its commitment to the refugees by supporting UNRWA programmes and helping the Agency promote a culture of peace and tolerance in the Middle East with a view to achieving not only an independent Palestinian State living side by side with the State of Israel, but also long-lasting and fruitful coexistence between the two peoples.

4. The financial situation of the Agency was a matter of concern. In view of the underlying financial problems, his delegation awaited the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the Agency's management capacity with a view to returning it to a healthy financial condition.

5. **Mr. Al-Falahi** (United Arab Emirates), expressing grave concern at the extremely dire situation that Palestine refugees were facing as a result of Israel's persistent acts of aggression and repressive policies, drew attention to the catastrophic socio-economic and human consequences of Israel's grave violations of the rights and freedoms of the Palestine refugees. He called

for additional pressure to be brought to bear on Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza, desist from hampering UNRWA projects, provide protection to Palestine refugees and guarantee the safety of UNRWA personnel and facilities in accordance with established agreements and treaties.

6. The problem of the Palestine refugees could not be divorced from the larger question of Palestine, and its solution lay in a comprehensive peace settlement which afforded the refugees their full rights under international law. In that connection, he noted that the marked decline in resources and financial support for UNRWA affected not just the Agency's ability to deliver its development programmes and projects but also its emergency assistance and aid programmes. The United Arab Emirates, which had already stepped up its support for UNRWA, would continue to provide the Agency with political, financial and moral support. He urged donors to increase their contributions in order to address the budget shortfall and meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestine refugees.

7. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba) said that the prolonged and brutal Israeli military occupation suffered by the Palestinian people and the denial of their basic human rights, including the right of self-determination and the right of return, were unjustifiable. Her delegation was concerned by the worsening situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the illegal treatment of the Palestinian people by the occupying Power. The construction of the separation wall and settlement activity were continuing.

8. The civilian Palestinian population and in particular the refugees had been in a more vulnerable situation since the brutal war waged by Israel in the Gaza Strip in December 2008 and January 2009. After the criminal attack by Israeli special forces on a humanitarian flotilla in May 2009, Cuba had called on the international community to demand that the Israeli authorities lift the blockade of the Gaza Strip. However, Israel continued to limit the movement of Palestinians, close crossings, block roads and restrict the movement of goods and, by blocking the entry of construction materials, was preventing the Agency from rebuilding schools in Gaza. Israel must stop its policy of closures in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which caused grave socio-economic harm to the Palestinian population. Her Government condemned Israel's

aggressive policy of blocking reconstruction projects in Gaza and impeding shipments of construction materials, which ignored the international community's repeated appeals and successive United Nations resolutions, and was in clear violation of international law.

9. UNRWA operated in extremely difficult conditions, made worse by Israel's unacceptable restrictions on the movement of people and vehicles. Furthermore, Israel continued to levy taxes and port duties on the Agency's shipments to the Gaza Strip and failed to protect United Nations premises and personnel, contravening international agreements. The Agency must receive full support and the necessary guarantees for the performance of its functions.

10. The financial situation of UNRWA was alarming and undermined its mission and its ability to strengthen its capacity through the organizational development process. The donor community must follow through with its pledges of aid.

11. **Mr. Al Khalifa** (Qatar) commended UNRWA on its services, particularly its programme offering children and young people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and host countries access to basic, technical and vocational education and thus wider opportunities for a decent life. It was highly regrettable that such efforts should be undermined, however, by the repressive measures imposed by Israel on Gaza and the West Bank. The shortfall in the UNRWA budget only compounded the difficulty of relieving the suffering that such measures caused.

12. He called for increased contributions to improve the level and quality of UNRWA services and emergency assistance programmes and expressed appreciation to donors; without their support UNRWA could not function. Qatar, for its part, would spare no effort to assist the Palestine refugees, who must be accorded their full rights not only on humanitarian grounds but in the interests of regional stability as a whole. There could be no solution to the Palestinian issue if the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people were not taken into account. In that connection, the recent statement by a representative of UNRWA suggesting that return was no longer an option for the Palestine refugees was incompatible with United Nations resolutions and the office which the representative held. UNRWA officials were expected to

care for the interests of Palestine refugees, not damage them by making remarks of that nature.

13. **Mr. Cohen** (Israel), affirming Israel's support for the humanitarian mission of UNRWA, said that, without compromising its own security, his Government would continue to do its utmost to facilitate the Agency's operations and reiterated its commitment to the understandings expressed in the Comay-Michelmores Exchange of Letters. Israel would continue to maintain its close coordination with UNRWA in the field. UNRWA leaders, including the Commissioner-General, had frequently acknowledged that close relationship and their statements on the subject reflected the day-to-day reality on the ground, in clear contrast with some of the statements made in the Committee and with the draft resolutions it would vote upon.

14. Israel was cooperating with UNRWA and other international organizations to ensure that humanitarian relief reached Palestinian populations in need. Despite continued terrorist attacks from the Gaza Strip, in June 2010 his Government had decided to liberalize the system for the entry of civilian goods and expand the inflow of materials for projects supervised by international organizations; the only goods that were still restricted were arms and war materiel, and certain items with dual use applications. As a result, the number of trucks entering Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing had doubled; however, Israel's ability to extend the opening of the Karni crossing had been limited by continued threats and terrorist attacks. Over the past four months, Israel had approved 31 new international development projects in the Gaza Strip, including 12 UNRWA projects; however, the Agency's logistical arrangements, and late submission of requests for materials, had created some delays in the delivery of building materials. Nine projects to build or expand schools and clinics had been approved, and construction materials were beginning to flow into Gaza for that purpose; and Israel continued to work with UNRWA to relocate schools that were near military installations cynically placed by Hamas in civilian areas. UNRWA would soon receive a letter from the Israeli authorities specifying the status of each and every project requested. Israel had undertaken many steps to promote and improve the West Bank economy, including the removal of hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints; those measures, and continued cooperation with international organizations,

were having a significant impact; during the first six months of 2010 alone, International Monetary Fund figures showed 9 per cent growth in real gross domestic product in the West Bank, and 16 per cent in Gaza.

15. There had been unfortunate instances in which UNRWA officials had made controversial political statements, not related to legitimate advocacy, that undermined the Agency's neutrality and harmed its humanitarian mission. The Agency was quick to deny statements by Agency officials that were not to the liking of the Palestinian side, but did not act in a similar manner in the case of statements by other Agency officials regarding Israel. As Israel had reiterated time and again, UNRWA should concentrate on its humanitarian role and not enter into the realm of politics.

16. Many Member States that had made politicized statements were not supporting the Agency in ways that could improve the conditions of the Palestinian refugees on the ground. No Arab country had been among the top 10 donors to UNRWA from 2000 to 2009; Arab countries had provided only about 10 per cent of the Agency's budget in 2009, while the vast majority of funding had come from Western countries. Israel hoped that its Arab neighbours would support the Palestinian people through meaningful contributions to organizations such as UNRWA, instead of offering empty and inflammatory rhetoric that did nothing to help the situation on the ground.

17. The draft resolutions before the Committee were politicized and ignored many basic facts, notably the destructive role played by the Hamas terrorist organization in the Middle East. Hamas called openly for the destruction of Israel, engaged in brazen weapons smuggling and terrorism, and continued to launch rockets at Israeli towns and civilians. It continued to place weapons in the midst of civilian populations and near United Nations facilities. It had issued countless threats to United Nations staff and tried to obstruct their work, confiscated food shipments intended for UNRWA, broken into the Agency's offices to steal equipment and launched two attacks on UNRWA summer camps in July 2010. He wondered why those facts were absent from the draft resolutions and from many of the statements made in the Committee.

18. Israel shared the goal of all parties to resolve the refugee problem, alongside the other aspects of the conflict. It called upon the Palestinian Authority to resume direct negotiations with Israel without delay. The conflict could be solved only through direct negotiations that took into account the vital interests of both parties.

19. **Mr. Seck** (Senegal) said that the expression "justice delayed was justice denied" summed up the courageous and painful odyssey of the Palestine refugees. No other group of refugees in modern times had suffered for so long. Their situation was morally unacceptable and legally untenable. The work of UNRWA was being frustrated, however, by various Israeli actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the blockade of the Gaza Strip and the violence and harassment in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; the Agency should be afforded optimal conditions for its work until a just and lasting solution was found to the question of the Palestine refugees, in accordance with the relevant resolutions.

20. The Agency's alarming financial situation was preventing it from insuring the full development of the human potential of the Palestine refugees. Essentially, the UNRWA deficit represented a lack of political will. UNRWA could not properly carry out its mandate unless the 1974 arrangement by which only an infinitesimal part of its financial needs were covered from the regular budget of the United Nations was reconsidered. No other solution would restore its financial health in the long term. In the meantime, however, all donors should act to ensure regular, predictable and sufficient financing for UNRWA programmes so that it could meet the vital needs of the Palestine refugees. Thus far, it was the generosity and solidarity of donors that had allowed the Agency to survive.

21. It was urgent to settle the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including the interests and rights of the refugees, through the establishment of a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

22. **Mr. Mashabane** (South Africa) said that until the Palestinian people realized their legitimate and inalienable right to self-determination, the role of UNRWA remained indispensable. The long-term solution to the refugee and humanitarian problems of the people of Palestine and the neighbouring Arab

States could only be a political one. South Africa called on Israel to honour its international commitments by putting an end to all further settlement construction in the Palestinian West Bank, which had created an impasse in the current phase of direct negotiations. That would demonstrate Israel's serious intention to bring about the establishment of a viable and fully independent Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with Israel and within internationally recognized borders. At the same time, South Africa called for an end to the shelling of rockets into Israeli territory, which did not advance the momentum of the negotiations or the achievement of peace. Continued unity among the Palestinian political leadership would also strengthen the negotiation process.

23. Reviewing the many contraventions by Israel of its obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the Gaza Strip, South Africa called for the immediate lifting of the unconscionable and unsustainable siege of Gaza, which had brought untold hardship to millions of ordinary people. Israel must comply fully with the provisions of international law outlined in previous resolutions of the General Assembly relating to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

24. South Africa was deeply concerned over the alarming shortfall in the Agency's operational budget. All Governments which had not yet met their pledges in full should contribute generously to UNRWA, and those which had not yet contributed should consider doing so on a regular basis. His own Government would continue both its political support for the Palestinian people and its economic support through UNRWA, the India/Brazil/South Africa Trust Fund and its bilateral capacity-building programme for Palestinians. Member States should also increase the Agency's funding from the regular budget.

25. The United Nations must continue to champion the cause of the victimized and the marginalized, the oppressed and the poor, and must restore their dignity. The work UNRWA was doing for millions of Palestine refugees was tangible proof of the Organization's commitment to their just cause.

26. **Mr. Tarawneh** (Jordan), expressing his Government's commitment to a resolution of the Palestine refugee issue in accordance with international law, said that Jordan allocated over \$500 million annually for refugee services and covered the costs of

any additional services that the Agency could not deliver. The overwhelming majority of Palestine refugees lived in Jordan, yet only 20 per cent of the Agency's general budget was allocated for services in that country, which was already facing financial and budgetary difficulties. His Government therefore reserved the right to claim proper compensation for the costs of hosting the refugees and displaced persons for six decades.

27. The reduction in the Agency's budget and services had created an additional burden, which host countries would not be able to bear. The results would be catastrophic for the Palestine refugees on a humanitarian and psychological level and could encourage some to adopt extremist ideas. The services and funding of the Agency should not be reduced but rather should be extended to include refugees living outside the camps. Moreover, a larger budget should be allocated for operations in Jordan.

28. His Government called on donor States and international financial institutions to demonstrate their support for the refugees by honouring their funding pledges as a matter of urgency. The private sector was no substitute for States when it came to contributions and the international community should support UNRWA in mobilizing resources to address the budget shortfall. He urged UNRWA to increase its staff numbers in response to the growing challenges which it was facing on the ground.

29. Jordan was gravely concerned about the continued suffering of the refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and called on Israel to end its inhumane and illegal practices and to facilitate the work of UNRWA, as it was required to do under international law. He reaffirmed his Government's steadfast commitment to cooperation with UNRWA and called for the Agency to be provided with strong financial and political support.

30. **Ms. Waleska Vivas Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the work UNRWA was doing was enormously beneficial, although the length of time it had been in operation was a permanent reminder of the tragedy of Palestine. The international community had a clear responsibility to work for a solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict that, once an independent and viable Palestinian State was established with East Jerusalem as its capital, would guarantee the return of the Palestinians to their lands.

31. The collective punishment Israel had been imposing with its four-year blockade on the Gaza Strip amounted to a humanitarian tragedy. Beyond the destruction of public and private infrastructure by the Israeli army under operation Cast Lead there were obstacles imposed on the Agency's humanitarian assistance and development work by the closure of borders, imprisoning 1.5 million people. As a result of the blockade, unemployment and poverty had risen markedly and the population had become even more dependent on external aid for food, water and all basic needs. The education of thousands of children had been crucially compromised because of the lack of infrastructure. Prohibitions on the entry of construction materials hindered the work of UNRWA and had brought to a halt the reconstruction or construction of housing, schools, health centres and the Agency's own facilities. To make matters worse, Israel was putting a financial burden on UNRWA by imposing transit fees on all materials brought in, in violation of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. Her Government called upon Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza immediately, remove all restrictions on Agency staff and goods, and reimburse the Agency for all border and other fees it had imposed on the transit of containers across the Gaza border crossings.

32. The situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was equally difficult. Illegal settlements were still being built in the Occupied Territories, and the Arab inhabitants were being expelled as settler violence against the Palestinian population increased. Road traffic had been curtailed, homes demolished and lands confiscated, making it impossible for the Palestinians to live and work normally, and for UNRWA staff to circulate freely.

33. As the principal provider of basic services for the Palestine refugees there was no reason that UNRWA should be short of funds and unable to carry out its work as mandated, especially its programmes for the poorest among them. Its funding should be put on a sounder footing, and that meant increasing the amount it received from the regular budget.

34. UNRWA was to be commended for its efforts to reconstruct the Nahr el-Bared camp in Lebanon; her Government supported everything the Agency was doing to improve the conditions of the Palestine refugees in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic as

well. At the same time, the assistance provided by those host countries deserved recognition.

35. **Mr. Rey** (Switzerland) said that UNRWA was an agent of peace and human development in the Middle East, exerting a stabilizing influence in a politically volatile region long torn by the Israeli-Arab conflict and other tensions. It had since its inception endeavoured as a trustworthy partner to reduce the disparities and tensions between the refugee populations and host countries and had on the whole acquitted itself well. Its presence was indispensable to a prospective peace agreement, as were its services to the Palestine refugees, who would play a central role in implementing a just and lasting solution.

36. Despite continued budgetary constraints, UNRWA was endeavouring to maintain high quality service delivery for an ever-growing number of refugees while moving ahead with its organizational development agenda, which would be the key to more efficient and effective service delivery in the medium term and would have a significant impact on its operations in the field. Switzerland would continue to support UNRWA in that regard, through the provision of experts and through funding for innovative and organizational development projects. Regarding the situation in Gaza, where UNRWA staff unions were demanding that personnel should be paid even when on strike, Switzerland fully supported UNRWA in its "no work-no pay" policy.

37. UNRWA had to be given sufficient funding to perform its vital stabilizing function. It had taken various steps to expand its donor base and form new partnerships to better serve refugees; Switzerland would continue to support the Agency's resource mobilization efforts which, if they fell short, would have a serious impact on the security of all those living in the region. Switzerland acknowledged the essential role that the host countries were playing with regard to service delivery to Palestine refugees.

38. Switzerland welcomed the Agency's efforts to mainstream protection into all aspects of its work. It remained deeply concerned, however, about the ongoing severe entry and exit restrictions in relation to Gaza. The partial lifting of the blockade announced in June 2010 had not yet led to perceptible improvements on the ground, and expected progress on reconstruction projects had not yet materialized. The protracted blockade continued to seriously impede the efforts of

UNRWA and other aid agencies to improve the humanitarian situation of the inhabitants of Gaza. Mechanisms had to be found quickly to speed up the delivery of construction materials and the passage of essential goods and humanitarian aid into Gaza in order to facilitate reconstruction and economic recovery and enable its 1.5 million inhabitants to live with dignity. All parties concerned should work to provide regular, predictable access to the area, while respecting Israel's security needs. Switzerland had submitted a proposal in that regard and was ready to make its technical expertise available to the international community.

39. **Mr. AlKulaib** (Kuwait), expressing grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian and environmental situation in the Gaza Strip and the unjust measures imposed on the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation authorities, recalled that in July 2010 a freedom flotilla, organized by concerned citizens from all over the world, including Kuwaiti nationals, had been attacked by the occupation forces, which had used lethal force against activists who were only transporting relief supplies. His delegation emphasized the importance of according the Palestine refugees the right of return and providing continued support to UNRWA. In that connection, his delegation categorically rejected the statements made by the Director of the New York Office of UNRWA, Mr. Andrew Whitley, regarding the refugees' right of return and was grateful to the Agency for distancing itself from those remarks.

40. Kuwait, which remained committed to providing voluntary annual contributions of \$1.5 million to UNRWA, called on the international community to continue to support the Agency and urged donor countries to fulfil their commitments and help mobilize resources. He commended UNRWA on the reforms under way to improve its services. He reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to, and solidarity with, the Palestinian people and called on Israel to abide by all the relevant United Nations resolutions calling for its withdrawal from the territory occupied in 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. Expressing his appreciation to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and all his staff for their dedication, he said that he hoped the Agency's financial problems would be overcome for the sake of the Palestine refugees.

41. **Ms. Khan** (Bangladesh) said that Israel's restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNRWA personnel and vehicles in the Occupied Territories were severely hampering the Agency's dedicated and essential humanitarian activities; those restrictions must be lifted.

42. Bangladesh noted with appreciation that the Agency had financed almost 30,000 small loans worth over \$27 million for small businesses and microenterprises in order to reduce unemployment and poverty, empower women and provide economic and financial opportunities for young people. As the birthplace of the concept of microcredit, Bangladesh was gratified at the success of the Agency's microfinance and microenterprise programmes and the rapid growth and wide acceptance of the concept in the region as a major tool for poverty alleviation and economic development. It called for further extension of the programmes, with a particular focus on empowering poor Palestinian women, and would be happy to share its expertise, particularly to finely tune the programmes to meet the specific needs of Palestinians and the region as a whole.

43. Bangladesh urged the international community to make generous contributions to fund the rehabilitation and emergency assistance programmes for the refugees in the Nahr el Bared camp in Lebanon.

44. **Mr. Bousselmi** (Tunisia) welcomed the valuable assistance which donor States had provided to UNRWA, especially the urgent assistance offered in recent weeks by a number of States and international institutions to address the budget shortfall. He called for intensified measures to find a solution that would address the root causes of the Agency's budgetary difficulties. He commended the Agency for the reform measures under way, which should help to improve the quality of refugee services and the way that budgetary resources were allocated and enable the Agency to adjust more easily to the increasingly complex political and economic climate in which it operated.

45. He called on Israel to end its practice of denying Palestine refugees their basic rights and freedoms, including their right to essential services and ownership of property, and demanded that Israel meet its obligations by creating the conditions that would allow UNRWA to fulfil its humanitarian mandate, pending a political solution.

46. He expressed appreciation to the host countries, which did so much to provide the Palestine refugees with a decent life, and reaffirmed that Tunisia would remain a steadfast supporter of UNRWA until a lasting solution for the refugees was found in accordance with international law.

47. **Mr. Erdman** (United States of America) said that the United States remained concerned about the situation faced by Palestinian refugees. UNRWA played a critical role throughout the region; thanks to the support of donors and host Governments, the Agency's humanitarian programmes had been able to improve millions of lives. The United States was the largest bilateral donor to UNRWA, having contributed more than \$237 million in the 2010 fiscal year, including \$130 million for the Agency's core services, \$105 million to support emergency relief and reconstruction, \$10 million to construct five new schools in Gaza and \$20 million to assist the 30,000 people displaced after the destruction of the Nahr el Bared camp in northern Lebanon. Since 2008, the United States had also provided more than \$1.5 billion, including \$650 million in direct budget support, to help the Palestinian Authority create the necessary institutions and economy for statehood. That included building essential infrastructure, rehabilitating schools and health clinics, advancing the rule of law, and supporting private sector development.

48. The United States remained committed to a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, and would continue working together with international partners to achieve that goal. UNRWA helped foster stability and moderation in the region while also promoting the human development of Palestinian refugees. Its neutrality and impartiality were critical to the fulfilment of its mandate.

49. The United States remained concerned about the Agency's inability to provide crucial humanitarian assistance due to chronic financial shortfalls; the Agency would continue to struggle unless there was a significant infusion of donor support. As critical needs mounted, he urged donor States to maintain their robust support and to reach out to non-traditional donors in order to secure the required level of funding for the Agency to maintain its high level of humanitarian assistance.

50. **Mr. Apakan** (Turkey) said that the mission of UNRWA was of critical importance to refugees, the stability of the Middle East and the international community; Turkey would continue to fully support its work. Speaking as the Chairman of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, he underscored that the Agency's financial situation was dire and that the problem had become structural in nature. The General Assembly should carefully examine the adequacy of its funding for UNRWA, with a view to providing the additional assistance required to help cover the increased management-related expenditure that the Agency was obliged to incur. In addition, he called on the international community to significantly increase its voluntary assistance and contributions. In that regard, Turkey intended to double its national voluntary contribution to the Agency.

51. All obstacles, both direct and indirect, to the work of UNRWA in the Occupied Territories must be lifted, and the Agency must be given full and unfettered access by the Israeli Government. The desperately needed reconstruction and infrastructure development projects must be initiated without further hindrances and should not be hampered by cumbersome procedures. Humanitarian assistance must be allowed to flow unimpeded. The inhumane and unlawful blockade of Gaza, now in its fourth year, was inflicting human misery on a massive scale and must be lifted immediately; Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) must be fully implemented.

52. With regard to Israel's slight easing of restrictions on Gaza, he recalled the context in which those measures had been introduced. As documented in the report of the fact-finding mission of the United Nations Human Rights Council, on 31 May 2010, Israeli forces had stormed a multinational humanitarian aid flotilla, leaving nine civilians dead and many more wounded. The Israeli army's disproportionate use of force and complete disregard for international law had triggered outrage and condemnation from the international community, including from the Security Council, that had compelled the Israeli Government to take some palliative steps towards easing its hold on Gaza. Turkey would pursue that grave breach of international law using all the means at its disposal and would not relent until justice was done.

53. The complexities of the region notwithstanding, Turkey sincerely hoped that all final status issues, including Palestine refugees, could be resolved through

direct negotiations and that a just and durable peace could be achieved in the Middle East. In that regard, it hoped that direct negotiations could be resumed as soon as possible and that the process could lead to an agreement that ended the occupation and resulted in the emergence of an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel. As the negotiations moved forward, the other tracks would also have to be reactivated so as to bring about comprehensive peace.

54. While UNRWA performed admirably in providing much-needed services for Palestine refugees, in reality, it was providing only the bare minimum that was required. Without a just and viable resolution of the core issue of refugees in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement, the plight of millions of exiled Palestinians could not be effectively redressed. Turkey would continue to support every effort to ease the predicament of the Palestinian refugees and to bring lasting peace to the Middle East.

55. **Ms. Dastidar** (India) said that while the services provided by UNRWA to Palestinian refugees were of critical importance in the context of the continuing violence in the Middle East, the Agency was clearly facing severe challenges, which hampered its ability to effectively discharge its mandate and directly impinged on the well-being of the refugees.

56. The Agency's budgetary shortfall was growing while at the same time the demands being made upon it for assistance had increased. Shortage of funds had a direct impact on its work, in particular on projects such as the rebuilding of the Nahr el-Bared camp. International efforts must therefore be increased in order to improve the situation.

57. The separation wall and encroachments on Palestinian land created great hardships for the affected population and exacerbated the already grim situation. Restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNRWA staff members were a continuing concern and hampered the Agency's ability to deliver services, including its ability to move staff and provide humanitarian assistance to those in urgent need. Closures and blockades must be lifted and unhindered access allowed for humanitarian supplies. The events of 31 May 2010 that had led to tragic loss of life and injuries to people carrying supplies bound for Gaza were deplorable.

58. The continued levy of fees and charges for the transit of humanitarian goods was unacceptable and seriously affected the work of the Agency. The detention of UNRWA staff and the Agency's lack of access to information about its staff was a matter of serious concern. In that regard, India supported the Advisory Commission's call for all parties to respect United Nations resolutions and international law, including international humanitarian law. It also supported the Commissioner-General's call for the removal of restrictions on the movement of the Agency's staff and goods. Further relaxation of the restrictions on the movement of construction materials was required in order for the situation in Gaza to be effectively addressed.

59. India continued to provide development support to Palestine and in 2009 had increased its annual contribution to the Agency to \$1 million, in addition to contributing another \$1 million in response to the flash appeal. It had also provided united budget support to the Palestinian National Authority of \$10 million per year for the past two years. India would continue to support the Palestinian cause, as it had done even before achieving independence in 1947, and would continue to do all it could to assist Palestine in terms of capacity- and institution-building.

60. The international community must work closely with the parties to encourage the resumption of the direct negotiations that had begun in September 2010, with a view to a comprehensive peace process and the final resolution of the conflict. Until that time, it was incumbent upon all Member States to support UNRWA fully; India endorsed all efforts to support the Agency by expanding its capacity to provide humanitarian assistance.

61. **Mr. Ryuno** (Japan) expressed appreciation to the Commissioner-General for his work and his recent visit to Japan, which had offered a valuable opportunity to raise awareness in Japan of the situation of the Palestine refugees and UNRWA activities. All UNRWA staff members deserved respect for their efforts to provide services to Palestine refugees under very difficult circumstances.

62. Japan took a proactive approach to the Palestine refugee problem, which it regarded as a core issue in the Middle East peace process. It had contributed a total of \$590 million to UNRWA and more than \$1.1 billion for the Palestinians since 1993. His

Government attached particular importance to providing assistance to the refugees in the area of human resources development, through education and vocational training, since Palestinian youth held the responsibility for Palestine's future and their participation in the creation of a society that gave them hope for the future would contribute to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State. The protection and empowerment of people was important to ensuring human security.

63. Japan would continue to advance its "corridor for peace and prosperity" initiative with a view to building an agro-industrial park in Jericho city by 2012 and establishing a good model for regional cooperation. The land for part of the park would soon be prepared and a solar energy system would be installed; Japan was also conducting a survey on the establishment of a sewage plant in Jericho.

64. His Government had furthermore decided to extend non-project grant aid of about \$18 million to the Palestinian Authority in support of its economic and social development efforts and would continue to support the Authority's institution-building and human-development programmes. It was exploring ways of working with other East Asian countries to contribute to Palestinian State-building efforts. His Government was very concerned about the impact of the serious financial crisis confronting UNRWA and would consider making additional contributions, if approved by the National Diet of Japan. Japan remained firmly committed to supporting UNRWA and its activities.

65. **Mr. Belkheir** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) asked whether the Agency's continued existence could be viewed as a crowning achievement in the United Nations struggle for peace and human rights. In his view, it made no sense that the suffering of an entire people should continue while the international community proclaimed its defence of human rights and called for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. The only viable solution lay in the right of return and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State occupying all the historic territory of Palestine.

66. The four-year Israeli blockade had turned the Gaza Strip into the world's largest prison, inflicting terrible suffering on the population and severely damaging the economy, while Palestinians in the West Bank continued to suffer from the unjust treatment meted out by the

occupation authorities. He questioned the purpose behind Israel's acts of brutality, which could not be justified on security grounds. The only possible explanation was that Israel wished to redraw the map of the region and eliminate the Palestinian problem by means of genocide and forced displacement.

67. Turning to the recent strikes by UNRWA staff in the West Bank, he expressed sympathy for the strikers' position and called on the United Nations to review the Agency's funding arrangements and compel Israel, as the party responsible for the Palestine refugee problem, to contribute to the UNRWA budget. In that regard, he deplored the statement made by the representative of Israel calling for more contributions from States to deal with a situation which Israel itself had created.

68. He drew attention to an agreement concluded by the Gaddafi International Charity and Development Foundation with UNRWA to provide for the reconstruction of 1,250 homes that had been destroyed in Gaza. The Foundation had also agreed to supply \$500 million to provide food aid to the poorest groups in Gaza during the month of Ramadan 2010. That humanitarian assistance, while necessary, was no substitute for the real solution, however, namely, the return of the refugees to their land and the establishment of an independent Palestine.

69. **Mr. Al-Wardi** (Oman) said that the Palestine refugees were experiencing ever increasing levels of poverty and economic deprivation, combined with extensive human rights violations and diminishing opportunities for a normal life. His delegation urged the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to end its hostility towards Palestinian civilians and its practice of impeding the work of UNRWA in violation of its international obligations.

70. He called for an end to the blockade of Gaza, which was inflicting terrible suffering on a population, half of which was made up of children, and commended UNRWA for the work that it was doing there in very difficult circumstances. Expressing grave concern at the financial difficulties facing UNRWA, he appealed to the international community to demonstrate solidarity by helping to end the crisis and facilitating the Agency's humanitarian work. Host States deserved recognition for the tangible assistance that they had provided to the Palestine refugees in their countries, and the Agency should be applauded for its remarkable efforts over the decades.

71. **Ms. Mesquita Pessôa** (Brazil) said that as a staunch supporter of UNRWA activities, Brazil had contributed to the Agency in recent years; it had made special contributions in 2010 for the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp and also for the development of specifically targeted food-security projects.

72. The humanitarian situation in Gaza remained unacceptable. Thus, the Israeli decision to limit the list of prohibited items was welcome, for it should enable more goods to be brought into Gaza, including building materials. Also positive was Israel's decision to expand the capacity and hours of operation of the Kerem Shalom crossing and to allow humanitarian workers and international personnel greater freedom of movement. Other urgent steps needed to be taken: all border crossings must be opened immediately, and kept open; regular exports from Gaza must be resumed in order to revive the crippled economy; the flow of persons in and out of Gaza must be fully restored; and it must be ensured that the population in Gaza did not survive only on international assistance. The blockade was in violation of international law and must be immediately lifted.

73. As an expression of solidarity with Palestine refugees, her Government had given about \$15 million to the Palestinian National Authority for economic support and for the reconstruction of Gaza. Part of the funds would be channelled through international organizations, including UNRWA, for reconstruction and development projects in Gaza in areas such as food security, rural development, school and hospital reconstruction and disaster risk reduction.

74. Brazil was concerned about the precarious financial situation of UNRWA, which could affect its ability to provide core services. The international community must reaffirm its commitment to the well-being and human development of the Palestine refugees. All countries in a position to do so, especially the developed countries, should increase their contributions to the Agency to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

75. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon) said that the Palestine refugees had been deprived by Israel of their human dignity and human rights and of their ability to serve themselves and their communities. Focusing on the Agency's budgetary shortfalls was an important concern, but the main goal must remain the refugees'

right of return, in accordance with the principles of international law, as an essential step on the road to a just peace.

76. His delegation commended the Agency's commitment to organizational development through the reform of its management structures and programme activities; it welcomed the medium-term strategy and the introduction of field and headquarters implementation plans. His Government appreciated the long-term support by major donors for UNRWA; it urged the donor community as a whole to mobilize the needed resources, especially for the Agency's general fund, in order to ensure proper service delivery. The General Assembly should consider providing additional financing for UNRWA from assessed contributions. The Agency's financial shortfalls were exacerbated by the illegal Israeli port and transit charges on shipments entering the Gaza Strip, in violation of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations. The Israeli blockade of Gaza and the requirement to palletize all container shipments had also entailed additional expenditure for UNRWA.

77. The Israeli blockade of Gaza was obstructing freedom of movement of persons and the arrival of UNRWA humanitarian assistance and essential goods, including the building materials needed to reconstruct the buildings and facilities destroyed by Israel during its war on Gaza in 2008-2009. Easing the blockade but not lifting it was unacceptable, and was a clear violation of the responsibilities of the occupying Power. As for the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Israeli occupation and its regime of closures, house demolitions, land confiscation and settlement activities, compounded by the racist separation wall, were adversely affecting the Palestine refugees and limiting their access to UNRWA services and resources.

78. As a country that was hosting about 400,000 Palestinians, and as a member of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, Lebanon was aware of the difficulties that faced the refugees. It was the responsibility of the international community to create decent living conditions for them in the densely populated camps where they were located in the interim. His Government, despite its meagre resources, was sparing no effort to ease their situation. In recent years, his Government had eased restrictions on entry into the labour market by Palestine refugees, and in August 2010 the Parliament had amended its employment legislation to grant additional rights to the refugees.

79. UNRWA was his Government's partner in providing for the needs of the Palestine refugees in 12 camps and 16 gatherings spread across Lebanon. In 2009, the UNRWA Lebanon field office had focused on improving the quality of health care; the focus for 2010 had been on improving education, engineering and relief services. His Government greatly appreciated the Agency's work on the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared camp following the attacks on it by the Fath al-Islam terrorist group; it thanked all donors that had pledged support for the reconstruction of the camp and called on them to honour their commitments.

80. The issue of Palestine refugees was a political one and not just a humanitarian concern. Israel was completely responsible for all their suffering and must fully respect their right of return. The international community was politically responsible for resolving the issue by holding Israel accountable to its obligations under international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law.

81. **Mr. Saripudin** (Indonesia) said that the report before the Committee confirmed much of what it already knew: life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had become increasingly unbearable. The closure of the borders of the Gaza Strip, now in its fourth year, was causing human misery on a massive scale. It was inconceivable that as much as 80 per cent of the population was now dependent on food assistance from the United Nations, that 90 per cent of the water was unsafe to drink and that 95 per cent of private businesses had closed down. Through it all, UNRWA continued to serve the millions of Palestine refugees still being denied their right of return and their right to fair compensation.

82. It was a time of great anxiety in the Middle East, following Israel's failure to extend the moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank that had expired in September 2010. As one of the core issues, settlements remained the biggest obstacle to peace. Israel's settlement policies and practices, aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, were a blatant violation of international law. If it was genuinely committed to peace and not simply engaging in propaganda, Israel would stop all settlement construction, expansion and planning and dismantle the settlements built in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The straits in which the Palestine refugees found themselves owing to continued settlement building,

collective punishment measures and the blockade were of great concern. The civilian infrastructure had been damaged or destroyed, as had the well-being of the Palestinian people as a whole, and Israel was making sure that nothing improved. Its illegal occupation since 1967 violated the Organization's principles and the sanctity of the Charter.

83. **Mr. Hu Bo** (China) said that China was concerned by the very difficult conditions under which the Agency was required to work in meeting the needs of Palestinian refugees, including funding shortfalls and threats to the safety of its staff. The humanitarian situation remained very grave in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and, in particular, in the Gaza Strip; as noted by the Commissioner-General in his statement to the Committee, in October 2010 only 24 per cent of scheduled imports for approved UNRWA projects had been allowed into Gaza. Accordingly, China called on Israel forthwith to lift its blockade and to allow all relief and reconstruction materials to pass unimpeded through its territory. Reaffirming China's support for UNRWA and its work, he pledged the continued provision of assistance to the Agency, in accordance with China's capacity.

84. **Archbishop Chullikatt** (Observer for the Holy See) commended UNRWA as it struggled, during a time of great political difficulty in the region, with ever-limited resources to meet the growing demands of an increasing refugee population, a significant proportion of which lived under the stricture of various embargoes. UNRWA and the Pontifical Mission for Palestine had been working for over 60 years to assist the Palestine refugees by providing medical, educational and other social services that would normally be the responsibility of the local governing authority. The Holy See was confident that there were men and women of good will who had the desire to promote the establishment of such a governing authority, but peace was a prerequisite.

85. Many of the issues raised in the Commissioner-General's report were in essence the symptoms of larger issues that had festered in the region for far too long. His delegation hoped that the renewed peace process could address the root causes of the situation and assist the Israelis and the Palestinians in establishing a secure state for Israel and a secure state and homeland for the Palestinian people. Each population had for over six decades been living under the threat of explosive acts of terror or of military

incursions. The casualties that had resulted and the senseless destruction of fragile infrastructure cried out for justice, which was the guarantor of peace. All hurdles to negotiations, particular those of recent origin, must be addressed without delay.

86. The Holy See called upon the members of the Quartet to use all strategies available to them to assist the peoples of the region to reconcile their substantial differences, to compromise fairly where necessary, and to guarantee peace for generations to come. Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained the key to ending the chaos in the Middle East, which had serious worldwide implications. The Holy See exhorted all legitimate interests to engage in substantive dialogue in order to bring stability and peace to the Holy Land. A lasting solution must include the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. In the light, too, of the numerous incidents of violence and the restrictions on freedom of movement resulting from the security wall, the Holy See believed that the freedom of religion and conscience of the inhabitants of Jerusalem must be internationally guaranteed, as well as permanent, unhindered access to the holy places for the faithful of all religions and nationalities. His delegation called on the international community to facilitate meaningful negotiations between all parties.

87. **Mr. Grandi** (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) expressed gratitude to those delegations that had announced additional financial contributions to the Agency for 2010 or 2011. He also thanked those that had reiterated the need to push ahead with reconstruction and economic revitalization in Gaza. It was important to address those issues both for the sake of the people and in the interests of the security of the region.

88. He reiterated his appreciation for the measures that had been taken by the Government of Israel to ease the blockade of Gaza but joined with others in appealing for the approval procedures for reconstruction projects to be made clearer and faster. He welcomed Israel's indication that approvals would be given in writing and that it was working on increasing the capacity of the crossings between Israel and Gaza. While Israel's security concerns were of course legitimate — indeed, he had joined with the United Nations in condemning attacks against Israel — so too was the well-being of the population of Gaza. Therefore, mechanisms must be put in place to ensure

the safe passage of construction materials into Gaza. The root causes of the blockade would need to be addressed, but the blockade must be lifted. He stressed the importance of speeding up the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared camp, which required urgent financial support from donors.

89. The Agency required adequate financial support; he would work to expand the donor base so that more Governments contributed more regularly to both the core budget and the emergency appeals and other special projects. He endorsed the idea of providing greater support to UNRWA from the United Nations regular budget, especially in view of the increasing number of mandatory tasks being implemented throughout the United Nations system, and urged that that possibility be seriously considered for the next biennium. He would continue working with the Advisory Commission to address the structural issues affecting funding, but recalled that early and substantial donations would continue to be necessary and reminded Member States that the Agency's annual pledging conference would be held the following month.

90. The Agency's work essentially involved enhancing human security through human development; he appreciated the recognition of the fundamental importance of that work. UNRWA was involved in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals at the practical level; it also had a special focus on working with young people, which was extremely important in such a volatile region.

91. UNRWA remained strongly committed to reform and hoped that the second phase of reforms would result in a tangible improvement from the perspective of the refugees. The Agency remained committed to advocating for the rights of refugees, while remaining politically neutral. He would be returning to the Middle East with a strong message of support from the Committee and hoped that the even more important message that peace was possible would soon be forthcoming.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.