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(Fourth Committee)**

Agenda item 51

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency for
Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

Letter dated 8 November 2013 from the Chair of the Arab Group for the month of November 2013 addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chair of the Arab Group of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York for the month of November 2013, I have the honour to attach hereto a document entitled “Conclusions of the Special Meeting of a Group of Supporters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East”, issued at the Group’s meeting in New York on 26 September 2013 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as an official document of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 51.

(Signed) Mohamed Khaled **Khiari**

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations
Chair of the Arab Group for the month of November 2013



Annex to the letter dated 8 November 2013 from the Chair of the Arab Group for the month of November 2013 addressed to the Secretary-General

Conclusions of the Special Meeting of a Group of Supporters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

New York, 26 September 2013

We, members of the League of Arab States and other supporters^a of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), met today, 26 September 2013, in New York under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to reassert our support for the mandate of UNRWA in providing assistance and protection to Palestine refugees and to identify practical ways to strengthen that support.

We recalled that Palestine refugees represent the world's largest and most protracted refugee situation and that nearly 64 years have passed since the General Assembly established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to assist Palestine refugees until a just and lasting resolution is reached in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions (General Assembly resolutions 194 (III) and 302 (IV)).

We welcomed the achievements of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in providing health care, education, social safety nets, infrastructure, microfinance, emergency assistance, protection and other humanitarian and human development services to the 5 million Palestine refugees currently registered with the Agency and in helping to alleviate their plight, achieve sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance and cope in times of crisis and upheaval.

We expressed awareness of the continuing needs of the Palestine refugees in all fields of operation and reiterated that the effective functioning of the Agency remains essential in all those fields.

We underlined that the Agency's work has been made possible by the active engagement of and the generous support and assistance from the international community, notably the members and observers of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, and in particular those hosting Palestine refugees.

However, we expressed our serious concern about the critical situation of UNRWA caused by increasing demands for services being placed on the Agency; the deteriorating socioeconomic and humanitarian conditions in the region requiring UNRWA to manage crises of varying intensity in all of its five fields of operation; and escalating financial pressures arising from the structural underfunding of the Agency leading to recurring and increasing core budget deficits. In that context, we

^a The five biggest donors (the United States of America, the European Union, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Sweden and Norway), regional representatives (Japan and Brazil) and the Chair of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (Turkey).

emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong, financially sound UNRWA as a contributor to stability in the Middle East.

To address those concerns and consistent with relevant United Nations and League of Arab States resolutions, we reaffirmed our collective commitment to provide UNRWA with the necessary, predictable and sustainable resources required to fulfil its mandate in all its fields of operation, in particular its core activities, and we rededicated ourselves to make all efforts to that end. In that context, we noted that the Agency's next medium-term strategy offers an opportunity to further address the sustainability of the Agency's core interventions and ensure that services are concentrated in areas providing the most value for refugees, in particular the most disadvantaged. Unearmarked contributions to the Agency's core budget (approximately \$650 million in 2013) are particularly important in enabling UNRWA to achieve this.

We welcomed the engagement of members of the League of Arab States to achieve and sustain the 7.8 per cent target for Arab Government contributions to the Agency's core budget as set out in numerous resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States since 1987. In that regard, we noted and encouraged the positive trend of increasing contributions to UNRWA by members of the League of Arab States in recent years, notably for the Agency's projects and emergency appeals.

We also welcomed the intention of other supporters of UNRWA to sustain and, wherever possible, enhance their support to the Agency and its work. We also encourage new donors to contribute to UNRWA.

We emphasized the shared international responsibility in respect of the Palestine refugee issue and committed to keep the Agency's financial situation under close review. We look forward to working with all of the Agency's friends and partners, notably through the General Assembly and, in particular, its Fourth Committee, the UNRWA Advisory Commission, the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA and other existing mechanisms of coordination and support, to strengthen the Agency and support its valuable work on behalf of the Palestine refugees as a stabilizing factor in the region.