

India Statement

By

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Deputy Permanent Representative**

**At the
Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of
Voluntary Contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works
Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East**

25 June 2019

Thank you, **Madam President** for giving me the floor.

2. We thank Mr. Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner General UNRWA for his briefing and the testimonials by the two young Palestinian students.
3. India's support to the Palestinian cause and solidarity with the Palestine refugees remains strong and abiding.

Madam President,

4. India has been supportive of UNRWA's work which is providing assistance to about 5.4 million Palestine refugees to help them achieve their full human development potential.
5. We commend UNRWA's partners, including existing and new donors, and the host governments for supporting UNRWA's work.

Madam President,

6. Almost all of the UNRWA's resources come from voluntarily contributions, with a limited donor base. This arrangement is fraught with uncertainties and could cause sudden crisis like the current one. Access to adequate predictable resources is the way forward.
7. UNRWA's difficult financial situation has caused concern and has put to risk the Agency's core services to the Palestine refugees, notably in the fields of education, health, and assistance to the most vulnerable refugees.

Despite this situation, the Agency has been successful in keeping these services operational throughout the last year.

8. We commend Mr. Krähenbühl for his leadership of the Agency to overcome the funding shortfall through a global campaign of fund raising and outreach, coupled with internal cost-saving measures. We hope that these efforts would continue.

9. The projected shortfall of more than \$ 200 million against a requirement of approximately \$1.2 billion has caused similar concerns this year also.

Madam President,

10. As a mark of our solidarity with the Palestine refugees, the Government of India has increased its annual financial contribution four-fold to the UNRWA core budget, from \$1.25 million in 2016 to \$5 million in 2018.

11. We note the expectation from donors to contribute at the same level as in 2018 so that the current projected shortfall could be closed.

12. We pledge to contribute \$5 million in 2019, at the same level as in 2018.

Madam President,

13. As part of the Government of India's ongoing assistance programmes in Palestine to strengthen capacity-building efforts focused on institutions, services and training personnel, we are providing 150 places for Palestinian professionals every year under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. India also provides 100 scholarships to meritorious students under the General Scholarship Scheme of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. These programmes are also available to Palestine refugees. India has also started an annual Youth Exchange Programme with Palestine since 2017.

14. In addition, during the last five years, under an India-Palestine development partnership, 17 agreements have been signed in the fields of agriculture, health care, information technology, youth affairs, consular affairs, women's empowerment and media. Under these agreements, around \$72 million of financial support and project assistance has been offered for projects like post-2014 war reconstruction efforts in Gaza; the construction of five schools; the India-Palestine Centre of Excellence for

Informational and Communication Technologies at the Al-Quds University, with a satellite centre in Ramallah; the India-Palestine Techno-park in Ramallah; a 100-bed super specialty hospital in Bethlehem; the construction of the Palestine Institute of Diplomacy in Ramallah; a National Printing Press; and establishing a Heritage Centre for the Empowerment of Women and Young People.

Madam President,

15. We commend the role of the Advisory Commission of UNRWA. Since the membership criterion to the Advisory Commission is \$15 million worth of contribution during 3 years, we hope that Advisory Commission members who have not been able to contribute up to this level would scale up their contribution.

Madam President,

16. We appeal to other traditional donors of UNRWA to consider enhancing their contributions and non donor member states to consider contributing to UNRWA in solidarity with the Palestine refugees.

Thank you, **Madam President.**