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Fourth Committee

Agenda Item: 50

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

INDIA STATEMENT by Ambassador K. Nagaraj Naidu Deputy Permanent Representative

11 November 2019

Thank you, Madam Chair for giving me the floor.

2. We thank Mr. Christine Saunders, Officer-in Charge of UNRWA, for his briefing.

Madam Chair,

3. India's support and solidarity with the 5.5 million Palestine refugees remains strong and abiding.
4. India has been supportive of UNRWA's work which is providing assistance to 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.
6. We support extending UNRWA's mandate for the next three years.

Madam Chair,

7. We note with appreciation Secretary General's efforts to effectively tackle allegations of managerial misconduct in UNRWA.
8. UNRWA's resources come from voluntarily contributions, with a limited donor base. This arrangement is already fraught with uncertainties of sudden crisis, therefore it is critical that the faith of donors in the agency is restored. In this regard, we thank the Secretary General for keeping the member states informed of the ongoing investigation and also for

confirming that the allegations under investigation do not relate to any fraud or misappropriation of operational funds provided by the donors.

Madam Chair,

9. UNRWA's financial situation is dire. The funding gap of \$89 million in 2019 remains a cause of concern as this 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.

10. 3.1 million Palestine refugees depend on health services provided by UNRWA. UNRWA school educate 526,000 students every year. 50% of these students are female. Keeping these services operational throughout the year is important.

11. The agency has been able to overcome similar funding gaps in the past through innovative global fund raising campaign and outreach and internal cost-saving measures. We hope that these efforts would continue, however these may still not be adequate in 2019.

Madam Chair,

12. We note the expectation from donors to contribute at the same level as in 2018 so that the current projected shortfall could be closed. As a mark of our solidarity with the Palestine refugees, the Government of India has increased its annual financial contribution fourfold to the UNRWA core budget, from \$1.25 million in 2016 to \$5 million in 2018. We have contributed \$5 million in 2019 and pledge to contribute \$5 million in 2020 also.

Madam Chair,

13. As part of the Government of India's ongoing capacity-building assistance in Palestine, 150 Palestinian professionals are trained every year under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. Every year 100 meritorious Palestinian students are offered fully funded scholarships under the General Scholarship Scheme of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. India has also started an annual Youth Exchange Programme with Palestine since 2017. These programmes are also available to Palestine refugees.

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 Chair,

15. UNRWA's Advisory Commission plays a crucial role in the governance 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 Chair,

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 Chair