

76th Session of UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Fourth Committee Joint General debate

“UNRWA” (Agenda item 54)

INDIA STATEMENT

Madam Chair,

India thanks the Commissioner General of UNRWA for his detailed annual report and his briefing to this Committee.

India deeply appreciates the work of UNRWA to ensure a life of dignity for millions of Palestinian refugees with the voluntary contribution of donor countries and support of the host countries. For nearly seven decades, UNRWA has been fulfilling its mandate in the fields of education, health, food security and social services.

Palestinian refugees are facing increased hardships. The continued uncertainty in West Bank and Gaza, the economic crisis in Lebanon and the ongoing conflict in Syria have worsened their living conditions. These challenges have only been exacerbated by COVID-19 pandemic. In this grim situation, UNRWA's services have been their safety net.

When the pandemic has upended the lives of people around the globe, UNRWA has continued to provide vital services and necessary humanitarian aid to the Palestinian refugees. The Agency has managed to adapt itself to the COVID-19 situation by introducing telemedicine, home delivery of food and medicines and setting up online learning through a digital learning platform. All this have been achieved despite the ongoing financial crisis of the Agency.

Madam Chair,

The dire financial situation of UNRWA is nothing new. However, it is concerning that shortfall of USD 100 million persists despite resumption of funding by UNRWA's tradition donors and the Agency's own efforts at innovative global fund raising, outreach and internal cost-saving measures. The funding gap remains a cause of deep concern as it puts to risk the Agency's core services.

In response to UNRWA's call for support, India has stepped up its annual contribution to the Agency and has committed 10 million dollars committed for 2021 and 2022. This is in addition to India's ongoing development assistance to Palestine along with scholarships for capacity building for Palestinians, which are open to Palestinian refugees as well.

For India, supporting UNRWA is an important pillar of our long standing commitment to the Palestinian cause. We consider UNRWA as an essential and valued partner in Palestinian nation-building. We also appreciate the steps taken by the Agency in ensuring transparency in its operations and adherence to the UN standards in humanitarian services, including in education. We look at furthering our partnership with UNRWA.

Madam Chair,

India has consistently underscored that a durable solution to the Palestine refugee question can be achieved only through the establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel, within mutually agreed borders. The resumption of direct peace negotiations between the two sides provides the best opportunity to resolve all final status issues and achieve the two-State solution. The international community has an important role to play in reviving these negotiations. India will remain fully supportive of all efforts to restart the peace process.

I thank you.
