

India statement on “UNRWA” (agenda item 52)
at the
Fourth Committee Joint General debate
of the
75th Session of UNGA

Mr. Chairperson,

India thanks the Commissioner General of UNRWA for his detailed annual report and his briefing to the Fourth Committee. *India aligns itself with the statement made by Azerbaijan on behalf of the NAM Group.*

India deeply appreciates their work of UNRWA to ensure a life of dignity for millions of our Palestinian brothers and sisters. For nearly seven decades, UNRWA has faithfully and effectively fulfilled its mandate to assist them. Today, when the pandemic has upended the lives of people around the globe, UNRWA’s mission has become even more relevant and remains vital - vital to providing life-saving humanitarian relief and health care and vital for the human resource development through education.

Mr. Chairperson,

Palestinian refugees are facing increased hardships everywhere. 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. It is indeed heartening to note that UNRWA staff – doctors, nurses, sanitation and social workers and teachers - have worked relentlessly, in close coordination with local authorities, to prevent and contain COVID-19 outbreak in the Palestinian communities. India salutes them.

Mr. Chairperson,

The dire financial situation of UNRWA is nothing new. However, it seems to be worsening with every passing year. The funding gap of around \$200 million in 2020 remains a cause of deep concern as this has once again put to risk the Agency’s core services. It is further more concerning that such shortfall persists despite UNRWA’s efforts at innovative global fund raising campaign, outreach and internal cost-saving measures. We appeal to other traditional donors of UNRWA to consider enhancing their contributions and non-donor member states to consider contributing to UNRWA.

Mr. Chairperson,

For India, supporting UNRWA is an important pillar of our long standing commitment to the Palestinian cause. We consider this support as not only a matter of expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people, but also as an investment in peace and stability in the region. Recognizing the acute financial crisis that the Agency faces, India has stepped up the annual pledge to UNRWA to USD 5 million from USD 1.25 million with another USD 10 million committed over the coming two years, i.e. 2021 and 2022.

In addition to the financial assistance to UNRWA, as part of its technical assistance to strengthen various Palestinian institutions, India is providing training to 150 Palestinian professionals every

year under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme and 100 scholarships to Palestinian students pursuing higher education, under the General Scholarship Scheme of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. Several Palestinian refugees have also participated and benefited from these programmes.

India is also happy to note that education has remained the largest funded segment in 2019 through the Agency's programme budget. No other investment yields as great a return as the investment in education. By educating the Palestinian youth, UNRWA is laying strong foundations for a future Palestinian society.

Mr. Chairperson,

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. Hence, India urges both parties to resume direct negotiations at the earliest. The international community must take concrete steps towards resuming and facilitating these negotiations quickly.

Thank you.
